LECTURES

ON THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH,

BY

ROBERT MACCULLOCH,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT DAIRSIE.

VOL. III.

WHO IS WISE, AND HE SHALL UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS? PRUDENT, AND HE SHALL KNOW THEM? FOR THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, AND THE JUST SHALL WALK IN THEM: BUT THE TRANSGRESSORS SHALL FALL THEREIN. HOSEA XIV. 9.

—I NOW WRITE UNTO YOU—THAT YE MAY BE MINDFUL OF THE WORDS WHICH WERE SPOKEN BEFORE BY THE HOLY PROPHETS, AND OF THE COMMANDMENT OF THE APOSTLES OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR. 2 PET. III. I, 2.

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LECTURES

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PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE fourth ſection of our Prophet's ſecond diſcourſe, compriſed in the third part of theſe Prophecies, commences with the chapter now before us, and extends throughout the whole of chapter thirty-ſecond. The portion of that beautiful variegated oration to be conſidered at this time, ſeems to have been primarily addreſſed to the Ephraimites and the Jews, at that critical period, wherein alarmed by their dangerous ſituation, an embaſſy was diſpatched by the Iſraelites into Egypt, requeſting the aſſiſtance of that powerful kingdom. In delivering the meſſage wherewith he was intruſted, Iſaiah again admoniſhes the perfidious people to whom he was ſent, of their extreme folly and danger in applying to the Egyptians for that aſſiſtance and defence which they might have had from God, infinitely more wiſe and powerful. This criminal conduct he ſharply reproves, and ſhews that the ſalvation of the people of God does not depend on worldly policy, but on divine protection. He then ſubjoins comfortable aſſurance of effectual ſuccour being granted to thoſe who, looking above an arm of fleſh,

placed their confidence in the living God. To excite terror in the wicked and profane, he denounces awful threatenings of the moſt direful calamities whereby the kingdom of Ephraim was to be overthrown. To cheriſh in the ſervants of the Moſt High the lively expectation of the bleſſings of divine grace, in the moſt perilous condition of the church, he explicitly declares, that they were to be plentifully enjoyed in the laſt days.—This elegant prophetic diſcourſe may be diſtributed into two parts, in the firſt of which, now to be conſidered, the Prophet expoſes the egregious folly of the Iſraelites, in requeſting the aſſiſtance of that nation who, in former times, had inſlaved and oppreſſed their fathers. For this purpoſe he contraſts the wiſdom and power of Jehovah, with the wiſdom and power of the Egyptians; he exhibits an illuſtrious inſtance of the divine protection to be afforded to the citizens of Jeruſalem, when beſieged by the Aſſyrians; and, having invited them to return to God, he foretels the total deſtruction of the formidable enemies of Judah.

CHAP. XXXI.

WO to them that go down to Egypt for help, and ſtay on horſes, and truſt in chariots, becauſe *they are* many; and in horſemen, becauſe they are very ſtrong: but they look not unto the Holy One of Iſrael, neither ſeek the LORD.

Our Prophet introduces the ſubject which he was to treat, by denouncing againſt the perſons whoſe conduct he reprobates, thoſe complicated calamities that demonſtrate the diſpleaſure of the Almighty againſt perverſe tranſgreſſors, thoſe terrible judgments which

which they incur who put their truſt in man in whom there is no help. The odious crime whereby the Ephraimites became expoſed to the awful puniſhment threatened againſt them, is deſcribed nearly in the ſame terms with thoſe employed in the preceding chapter. Diſtruſting the Lord God, who in times paſt had been their defence and deliverer, and placing fooliſh confidence in the power of Egypt; they ſolicited from thence aſſiſtance in the preſent critical ſituation of public affairs. Though they well knew, or might have known, that a horſe is a vain thing for ſafety, neither ſhall he deliver any by his great ſtrength; yet they viewed the military force, the cavalry and chariots of war they expected from Egypt, as their ſtay in the ſeaſon of impending danger.—'Put not truſt in men of low 'degree who are vanity, nor in men of high degree 'who are a lie.' If you confide in human aid, you ſhall certainly be deceived or diſappointed; you ſhall be aſhamed or vexed; you ſhall feel the effect of the curſe connected with ſuch impious conduct. We may apply to men for help, but we muſt take heed that we truſt not in creatures whoſe breath is in their noſtrils.—The ſin here threatened was highly aggravated by the following circumſtance:

But they look not unto the Holy One of Iſrael, &c. Inſenſible to their own inſufficiency and indigence, they did not ſurvey, in the exerciſe of believing contemplation, the perfections, the promiſes, and providence of God; nor did they recollect, with ſuitable diſpoſitions of mind, the intimate relations in which they ſtood connected with him whom they ought to have honoured and ſanctified.——*Neither did they ſeek the Lord;* they requeſted not with earneſtneſs his direction, aſſiſtance, and protection, his favour and ſupport. Indifferent to the important benefits which they ought to have been ſolicitous to obtain, they did not aſk them from God with faith and fervency, with integrity and uprightneſs, with humble dependence, perſevering continuance,

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and lively hope of ſucceſs.—Would you, my brethren, eſcape the miſeries denounced in this verſe; truſt not in the creature, which is only as a bowing wall, and a tottering fence; repreſs that confidence which might withdraw your hearts from God, and terminate in your diſgrace and ruin. If you lean on the creatures as a ſtaff, they will pierce your hand like a broken reed; if you take ſhelter in them as in a rock, they may fall upon you and prove your deſtruction. He that truſteth in vanity, vanity ſhall be his recompenſe. In every difficulty and danger, have recourſe to God for ſupport and deliverance, whoſe ſecret powerful operation moves the hearts, the tongues, and hands of men. 'Better it is to 'truſt in God than to put confidence in man,' who may be unable or unwilling to help, or be cut off before he can convey to us any ſubſtantial relief.

2 Yet he alſo is wiſe, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words; but will ariſe againſt the houſe of the evil doers, and againſt the help of them that work iniquity.

In this verſe, ſharp reproof is adminiſtered to thoſe who, depending on human aid, neglect to acknowledge God. To convince them of their folly and preſumption, they are inſtructed, that the wiſdom, the power, and faithfulneſs of Jehovah, being infinitely ſuperior to the excellencies poſſeſſed by people of the greateſt celebrity, render him the moſt proper object of confidence. The Egyptians were anciently conſidered by neighbouring nations as a wiſe, political, and powerful people; they were long held in high eſtimation, on account of their learning and acquaintance with many uſeful arts and ſciences. Admitting that they juſtly deſerved this reſpectable character, yet it ought to be remembered, that 'he who giveth wiſdom, muſt himſelf be wiſe, 'he who teacheth man knowledge, ſhall not he 'know?' He is the only wiſe God, whoſe wiſdom and

and underſtanding are infinite. If men are reckoned wiſe who poſſeſs extenſive acquaintance with important ſubjects, who govern with prudence their paſſions, who manage their affairs with diſcretion, and purſue the beſt ends by the moſt proper means; ſurely the Moſt High alſo is wiſe, from whom proceeds all the wiſdom and ſkill which is diſperſed throughout the creation. Be it then, as you ſay, that the people from whom you aſk aſſiſtance are wiſe and prudent, yet you cannot deny that God alſo is wiſe, infinitely wiſer than men, who are indebted to him for all the penetration and ſagacity they poſſeſs. He can eaſily defeat both you and thoſe whom you call to your aid, and baffle all your beſt concerted ſchemes. He, who with conſummate ſkill, directs the whole courſe of nature, the actions of all his creatures, and the events that happen throughout the univerſe, can never want inſtruments to execute his purpoſes, and to fruſtrate the deſigns of thoſe who contemn his direction and ſupport.—Let us then acknowledge God in all our ways, not only in dubious and perplexing circumſtances, and in arduous interprizes; but in the ordinary buſineſſes of life. Conſcious that the way of man is not in himſelf, that we cannot aright direct our ſteps; let us aſk his conduct and bleſſing in all our affairs, and commit our works unto the Lord, and our thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed.

And will bring evil, &c. In place of the good that you expect ſhall accrue from the wiſdom and power of your confederates. The evil predicted is not what is called moral evil, or ſin, which doth not proceed from God; but that which is known by the name of natural evil, affliction, and calamity; the proper conſequence and juſt puniſhment of tranſgreſſion. Of all the diſtreſſes compriſed in this ſort of evil, Almighty God is the ſovereign wiſe diſpoſer, to whoſe permiſſion and agency they muſt be aſcribed. 'Can a bird,' (ſaith the Prophet Amos) 'fall 'into a ſnare upon the earth, where no gin is laid 'for him?' It muſt be planted for that purpoſe by

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a ſkilful hand. He again inquires, as the proper application and inference to be deduced from this figure, 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord 'hath not done it *?' Affliction doth not ſpring out of the ground, like thoſe herbs and plants which grow without labour and cultivation; it is not caſual, nor doth it come by accident. It proceeds from the all-wiſe righteous appointment of the ſupreme Lord of all; it is diſpenſed by infinite wiſdom to individuals and ſocieties, as the fruit and puniſhment of ſin. It is the rod whereby the Lord chaſtens, the furnace in which he refines his people. From the nature of this painful, but ſalutary medicine, we may often collect the kind of diſtemper it was intended to cure; from the threatened or inflicted evil, we may diſcover the procuring cauſe that brought it on.

And will not call back his words. 'God is not a 'man that he ſhould lie, neither the ſon of man that 'he ſhould repent; hath he ſaid, and ſhall he not 'do it? hath he ſpoken, and ſhall he not make it 'good †?' He will not retract what he hath ſaid. 'His word that goeth forth out of his mouth, ſhall 'not return to him void; but it ſhall accompliſh 'that which he pleaſes, and it ſhall proſper in the 'thing whereto he ſends it ‡.' No good reaſon can be aſſigned, why Jehovah ſhould recal his words. Our natural inſtability, our want of foreſight, our incapacity to execute our reſolutions, frequently give riſe to a change in our ſentiments, and oblige us to alter our purpoſes: But God is of one mind, and none can turn him; all his works are known to him from the beginning; for him nothing is impoſſible; and therefore what he hath ſpoken with his mouth, he will accompliſh with his hand. In vain then do thoſe who look to men for help, expect that God will alter his determined purpoſes, and allow them to perſiſt in wickedneſs, and paſs unpuniſhed. The expreſſion before us plainly intimates, that

* Chap. iii. 56. † Numb. xxiii. 19. ‡ Iſa. lv. 11.

that God, who is faithful, would certainly inflict the judgments threatened by his ſervants on the Ephraimites and their allies, though they might flatter themſelves with impunity. Many ſtriking inſtances of the truth I am illuſtrating occur in ſcripture, to which I would have you carefully to advert; that you may be fully convinced that the word of God ſhall ſtand, and ſhall never fail of being accompliſhed, notwithſtanding every intervening obſtacle.

But will ariſe againſt the houſe of evil doers. Every one that doeth evil is not included under this deſcription, but thoſe only who obſtinately perſiſt in evil-doing, and refuſe to be reſtrained by the authority, the clemency, and the judgments of God. Such incorrigible tranſgreſſors were the houſe of Iſrael at the time this prophecy was delivered, concerning whom the Lord afterward declared by his ſervant Jeremiah, 'Behold, thou haſt ſpoken and done evil 'as thou couldeſt *.'—*And againſt the help of them that work iniquity.* The Egyptians, whoſe aſſiſtance was expected by the Ephraimites, in their preſent hazardous condition, ſeem to have been the perſons primarily intended by this deſcription. After the manner of a great offended monarch, Jehovah declares, that he would go forth againſt both theſe nations, to inflict righteous vengeance upon them, for the injuries they have done to him and his kingdom—That he would ariſe, not merely to oppoſe their progreſs by moral reſtraints, ſuch as commands and threatenings, but effectually to give check to their acts of hoſtility, by the exertion of his Omnipotence, and ſeverely to puniſh them for contempt ſhewn to him and his laws. All reſiſtance, therefore, ſhould prove altogether unavailing to counteract the purpoſes he had determined to accompliſh.—If any thing prevent or ſtop the progreſs of threatened evil, it is prayer and penitence. Theſe peaceful meſſengers have often arreſted divine judgments in their courſe, and hindered them from being inflicted

* Chap. iii. 5.

flicted. 'The Lord would have deſtroyed Iſrael, had 'not Moſes his choſen ſtood before him in the breach, 'to turn away his wrath, leſt he ſhould have deſtroy-'ed them *.' In ſome inſtances prayers and tears may prove ineffectual to avert impending calamities; for thus ſaid the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, 'Though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before me, yet 'my mind could not be toward this people: caſt 'them out of my ſight, and let them go forth†.' The words plainly intimate, that the interpoſition and ſupplications of God's moſt faithful ſervants, in the caſe referred to, could not prevail to avert that merited deſtruction, from which the poſterity of Jacob had enjoyed a long reprieve.

3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horſes fleſh, and not ſpirit. When the LORD ſhall ſtretch out his hand, both he that helpeth ſhall fall, and he that is holpen ſhall fall down, and they all ſhall fall together.

The extreme folly and danger of thoſe who placed dependence on Egypt is here farther repreſented. The propoſition contained in the firſt part of the verſe is incontrovertible, ſo evident, that it muſt be univerſally acknowledged. The plaineſt truths, however, ſuch as that which lies now before us, muſt not be overlooked or diſregarded. Men, though wiſe and powerful, are but men; weak, frail, mortal creatures, whoſe exiſtence, faculties, and actions, depend entirely on divine Providence. They can do nothing more than God gives them ability to perform, nor can they execute any enterpriſe, but what he enables or permits them to accompliſh. Hence the important advice given by our Prophet, 'Ceaſe 'ye from man whoſe breath is in his noſtrils; for 'wherein is he to be accounted of?' It is better to truſt

* Pſal. cvi. 23. † Chap. xv. 1.

truſt in God than to put confidence in man. Had the Iſraelites attended to this ſimple remark, they would not have confided in the Egyptians, but in the living God, who is omnipotent, invincible, and immortal.—*Their horſes are fleſh, and not ſpirit;* of which they poſſeſſed neither the nature nor the properties. Though they might be celebrated on account of their excellence and their numbers, they were ſubject to diſtempers, to decay, to accidents, to fatigue in conſequence of long marches, they were liable to be wounded and ſlain in battle. They were therefore a vain thing for preſervation, neither could they deliver by their great ſtrength. As ſaith the proverb, 'The horſe is prepared againſt the day 'of battle, but ſafety is of the Lord.'—Some truſt in chariots, and ſome in horſes, but let us remember the name of the Lord our God, the ſtrong tower to which the righteous run and are ſafe. Of the truth of the preceding remark, the children of Iſrael were to receive convincing proof.

When the Lord ſhall ſtretch out his hand, &c. In prophetic language God is ſaid to ſtretch out his hand, when he inflicts righteous judgment upon men for their ſins. 'Behold, therefore,' (ſaith he by the prophet Ezekiel) 'I have ſtretched out my hand 'over thee—and have delivered thee unto the will 'of them that hate thee *.' The expreſſion is metaphorical, and alludes to the practice of thoſe who extend their arm, when about to perform any arduous work. It plainly intimates, that Jehovah was to exert his Almighty power in puniſhing his ungrateful people, and thoſe on whom they truſted for aſſiſtance, whilſt they neglected to repoſe confidence in him, who had often helped and delivered their fathers. In conſequence whereof—*Both he that helpeth*, &c. The overthrow both of the Egyptians and of the Ephraimites, who requeſted their ſuccours, is clearly foretold in theſe words. Though you have called to your aid and protection, a powerful

* Chap. xvi. 27.

nation, who hath helped other kingdoms in times of diſtreſs and danger, they ſhall not be able to afford you the ſupport you require; you and they ſhall fail in accompliſhing the end that you have in view. You may aſſociate yourſelves together, but neither of you ſhall eſcape deſerved calamities. Though hand join in hand, though kingdom be confederated with kingdom, the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed. 'Curſed,' ſaith Jehovah, 'be the man 'that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, 'whoſe heart departeth from the Lord.'—Aware then of the extreme danger to which we ſhall inevitably expoſe ourſelves, by placing confidence in the creature; let us truſt in the Lord Jehovah who made heaven and earth, and carefully abſtain from this execrable practice, which terminates in diſappointment, diſtreſs, and ſorrow.

4 For thus hath the LORD ſpoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of ſhepherds is called forth againſt him, *he* will not be afraid of their voice, nor abaſe himſelf for the noiſe of them: ſo ſhall the LORD of hoſts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

Still farther to reprove the folly of the Ephraimites, another argument is ſubjoined, derived from the protection which God was about to afford the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, when aſſailed by the Aſſyrians.—To excite reverence and attention to this ſubject, Iſaiah declares, that the Moſt High had expreſsly communicated to him the following information, in which the invincible power, and tender compaſſion of Jehovah, diſplayed toward his peculiar people, are beautifully repreſented by two ſimilitudes; the one taken from an animal remarkable for its ſtrength and heroic courage, the other from birds,

birds, whoſe vigilance and ſolicitude for the ſafety of their young ones are well known—The former is borrowed from a lion, one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt magnanimous beaſts of the foreſt, and a young lion in his full vigour, who remains undaunted in the poſſeſſion of his prey amid all the efforts employed to terrify him. By this figure is repreſented the conduct of the Almighty, who is not afraid of any, and who ought to be feared by all, when he appears executing awful vengeance upon his enemies.—The prey on which the lion is ſaid to roar, in way of exultation, may denote the city Jeruſalem, which of old was the ſeat of heathen ſuperſtition, from which it was forcibly taken, that it might be converted into the ſeat of true religion, and divine worſhip, under the immediate inſpection and defence of Jehovah.—A multitude of ſhepherds called forth againſt the lion, may ſignify the numerous army aſſembled by the king of Aſſyria to beſiege the metropolis of Judea, to ſpoil its inhabitants, to diveſt it of the guardian care of Jehovah, and to reſtore its ancient ſuperſtition and idolatry. At this eventful period, the Lord of hoſts cauſed his tremenduous voice to be heard, and gave intimation that he was determined to keep poſſeſſion of his choſen city, and to defend from their foes, the people he had appropriated to himſelf.—*He will not be afraid of their voice, nor abaſe*, &c. Far from being in any meaſure intimidated by the noiſe, and the approach of thoſe who were called forth to injure the intereſts of the objects of his favour, far from haſting away and leaving them defenceleſs, the Lord that ſitteth in heaven had them all in deriſion. This interpretation, which is ſupported by other paſſages in the Prophets, where God in the execution of awful judgments is ſpoken of under the ſimilitude here uſed, does not require from me any formal vindication.

So ſhall the Lord of hoſts come down, &c. The preceding compariſon ſerves to give ſome idea of the wonderful interpoſition of Jehovah in behalf of his

his people, and of the remarkable proofs he was to give on the occaſion above mentioned, of his power and preſence manifeſted for the protection of Mount Zion, and the hill thereof, whereon ſtood the palace and the city of David, with the magnificent temple dedicated to the worſhip of the living God. It likewiſe places, in a ſtriking point of view, the fruitleſs attempts of the moſt formidable enemies of Jeruſalem, whilſt the Almighty continued to extend to that city his guardian care and defence. It teaches with what ſovereign contempt the Moſt High over all the earth, treats the hoſtile exertions of thoſe who are inimical to the ſacred intereſts of his church, and the perfect ſafety which they ſhall enjoy whom he compaſſeth with favour as with a ſhield.—How impregnable the defence which God forms around them that hope in his mercy! They that truſt in the Lord ſhall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jeruſalem, ſo the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth even for ever. The gracious protection afforded by the Lord to his ancient church, repreſented by the hills that encompaſſed the holy city, and rendered it invincible, whilſt the inhabitants repoſed their confidence in the divine omnipotence, prefigured the ſtill greater felicity of thoſe under the New Teſtament, whoſe refuge and fortreſs is Jehovah. Such may adopt the triumphant language of the royal poet, 'The Lord liveth, and 'bleſſed be my rock, and let the God of my ſalva-'tion be exalted *.'

5 As birds flying, ſo will the LORD of hoſts defend Jeruſalem: defending alſo he will deliver *it*, *and* paſſing over, he will preſerve *it*.

The ſubject now before us is illuſtrated in this verſe by another pleaſing ſimilitude, which marks with

* Pſal. xviii. 46.

with peculiar beauty and energy, the tender affection and conſtant ſolicitude, which God, in whom compaſſions flow, never fails to diſcover for the ſafety of his children, eſpecially when they are in danger. There are two ways by which the feathered tribes ſhow affection for their young ones, and their anxiety for defending them from injury. Some, alarmed at the approach of any creature, by whom they ſuſpect their brood may be hurt, fly hither and thither with great velocity through a certain ſpace around their neſts, gaping, crying, and fluttering with their wings. Others, when terrified that their young ones are in danger, fly inſtantly to their protection, ſtretch forth their wings for their defence, whilſt they appear determined that they will rather indanger their own life, than permit their helpleſs charge to be hurt. To birds of this laſt deſcription, I ſuppoſe that our Prophet chiefly refers, though he might alſo have reſpect to thoſe firſt mentioned. The agreeable protection which Almighty God vouchſafes to convey to his beloved people, is frequently deſcribed in ſcripture, in alluſion to this well known emblem. 'Shew me thy marvellous loving 'kindneſs,' (ſaid the royal poet) 'hide me under 'the ſhadow of thy wings *.' And again, 'Becauſe 'thou Lord haſt been my help, in the ſhadow of 'thy wings will I rejoice †.' By this familiar image, Jeſus Chriſt illuſtrates his compaſſion toward Jeruſalem, 'How often would I have gathered thy chil-'dren together as a hen gathereth her chickens un-'der her wings ‡.' In theſe moving words, the gracious Redeemer expreſſes his divine benevolence and tender pity toward the ungrateful, obſtinate inhabitants of that highly favoured city, and reminds them that with paternal fondneſs, he would readily have admitted them to ſhare in his kind protection. The prediction before us then imports, that as the parent bird on the approach of danger, takes her young ones under her wings to ſhield them from whatever might

* Pſal. xvii. 8. † Pſal. lxiii. 7. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 37.

might hurt or annoy them, ſo the Lord of hoſts would guard his peculiar people from the hoſtile attempts of their powerful enemies.—The ſubject is farther explained in the next words.

Defending alſo he will deliver it, &c. Such is the extenſive unremitting care which Jehovah exerciſes over the objects of his love, that in the moſt perilous ſituation, they enjoy deſirable ſafety. The Lord is their rock, their fortreſs, and their deliverer; they dwell in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, and abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty—*Alſo he will deliver them.* No weapon formed againſt them could proſper; for God himſelf was to ſave them from the intended deſtruction; ſo that according to the prophecy of Obadiah, 'Upon Mount Zion, there 'ſhall be deliverance.'—*Paſſing over he will preſerve it.* There ſeems here to be an obvious alluſion to the memorable event that happened at the time wherein God brought forth the children of Iſrael out of the land of Egypt. The angel of the Lord went forth, and in one night ſlew all the firſt born in that kingdom, whilſt he paſſed over all the firſt born of the Iſraelites, whoſe door poſts were ſprinkled with the blood of the paſchal lamb. In like manner, the angel ſent to ſlay the Aſſyrian army, which laid ſiege to Jeruſalem, was to paſs over the inhabitants of that city, who were to be preſerved alive, whilſt by the terrible vengeance of heaven, their enemies were to be totally routed. I forbear at preſent to ſay any thing of the hiſtory which relates the exact accompliſhment of what is here foretold, to which I have already had frequent occaſion to refer.—Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, who paſſeth by the tranſgreſſion of the remnant of thy heritage, he retaineth not his anger for ever, becauſe he delighteth in mercy. How aſtoniſhing the interpoſitions of divine Providence for the preſervation of the church, which indeed reſembles the buſh burning and not conſumed. The gracious aſſurances which God hath given

given to his ſervants, of his watchful care, and the wonderful deliverances he hath wrought for them, ought to excite us to exalt his name, to celebrate his praiſes, and to place unſuſpecting confidence in his mercy, power, and faithfulneſs. How excellent is thy loving kindneſs, O God, therefore we put our truſt under the ſhadow of thy wings.

6 Turn ye unto *him from* whom the children of Iſrael have deeply revolted.

A ſuitable exhortation to a moſt important duty, which may alſo be conſidered as a prophetic declaration of what was to happen at the period to which Iſaiah looked forward, is ſubjoined to the reviving predictions delivered in the preceding verſes. When God is about to work ſome great deliverance for his people, he prepares them thankfully to receive the mercy he intends to beſtow, and then ſeaſonably confers it upon them. This remark is exemplified in the paſſage of ſcripture now before us. Having foretold the preſervation of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem amidſt imminent dangers, that they might give this diſtinguiſhing favour a proper reception, our Prophet calls upon his countrymen to turn to him from whom they had revolted. He clearly ſets before them their duty, and urges the practice of it by a very forcible motive.—The prophet Jeremiah, in the name of the Lord, brought this heavy charge againſt the children of Iſrael, and the children of Judah, 'They have turned to me the back, and not 'the face, though I taught them riſing up early and 'teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to re-'ceive inſtruction *.' By forſaking the fountain of living water, and having recourſe to broken ciſterns, they manifeſted the moſt criminal contempt of the all-ſufficient God. I do not affirm that they were always conſcious of acting under the influence of this odious diſpoſition, or that they were ſenſible of that

* Chap. xxxii. 33.

that averſion from God, which they diſcovered by their conduct. I mean to ſay, that they were gone aſtray from God, every one to his own way. By acting in this manner, they preferred temptations to tranſgreſſion to the promiſes of God, the enjoyment of the creature to the favour of the Creator, indulgence in ſin, to the practice of commanded duty. They ſlighted the divine perfections of Jehovah, they forfeited the protection of his providence, they neglected the duties of his worſhip, they violated his ſupreme authority, and ſet at nought the riches of his goodneſs. Thus eſtranged from God, were the poſterity of Jacob, when, lo, the voice of mercy is heard.

Turn ye, &c. The expreſſion is metaphorical, borrowed from the relative ſituation of objects, after their poſition is reverſed. It plainly imports, that their internal diſpoſitions, and their external deportment, with reſpect to God and the objects with which they were connected, ought to have been totally altered, ſo as to form a contraſt to their former condition. They were required to aſſume a new temper, poſture, and aſpect, quite different from thoſe wherein they indulged in times paſt, after they had revolted from the Moſt High. Their minds, formerly occupied with vain, fooliſh, ſceptical thoughts, were to be employed in contemplating with admiration and pleaſure, the attributes, the providence, the word, and ſalvation of Jehovah. Their hearts, which had gone after idols and earthly objects, were to relinquiſh criminal attachment to theſe lying vanities, that they might be conſecrated entirely to God, who vouchſafed to demand them for himſelf. The homage which they had given to dead idols, the work of mens hands, was to be tranſferred from them, and appropriated to the only living and true God, who hath done whatſoever he pleaſed in heaven and earth. From being obdurate, perverſe, and diſobedient, they were to become tender, flexible, and ſubmiſſive to God; inclined to that

which

which is well pleaſing in his ſight. In one word, by turning to the Lord, they were not only to forſake their unrighteous thoughts, but to abandon their wicked ways, to amend their doings, which had not been good; that they might obey the voice of the Lord their God, and truſt in his ſalvation. Such ſeems to be the import of the neceſſary exerciſe here inculcated, which is no leſs incumbent on you, my friends, than upon the men of Iſrael and Judah.—Turn ye unto the Lord, be not negligent in uſing the means which God hath inſtituted for bringing you to true repentance; and earneſtly pray that his bleſſing may render them effectual. Forſake the fooliſh, and live and go in the way of underſtanding. Renounce all your tranſgreſſions, whereby you have departed from the living God; and devote yourſelves without reſerve to his ſervice, ſolicitous to enjoy the divine countenance and preſence. Think upon your former ways and doings, that have not been good, and turn your feet without delay unto God's teſtimonies. Take heed that you turn

To him from whom the children of Iſrael, &c.—The people to whom theſe words were primarily addreſſed, were reminded of the intimate relation that ſubſiſted between them and the patriarch Jacob, their renowned progenitor, and the conſequent obligations they lay under to the ſervice of Jehovah, who had promiſed to be the God of his poſterity. If they were ſolicitous to enjoy the benefits comprehended in the covenant of God made with their fathers, they ought to have imitated their faith and obedience, and to have ſhewn inviolable attachment to the worſhip and ordinances, which he had inſtituted among them. But alas! from him they had deeply revolted: through an evil heart of unbelief they rebelled againſt his rightful authority; they refuſed to yield him the homage that he demanded, whilſt they allowed other lords beſide him to have dominion over them. This root of bitterneſs ſpring-

ing up, troubled them, whereby many were defiled. How affecting the teſtimony given concerning them, by the prophet Jeremiah, 'They have a revolting 'and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone; 'neither ſay they in their heart, Let us now fear 'the Lord our God *.' Proper recollection of their evil ways, whereby they had forſaken the God of their fathers, who had done great things for them, ought to have deeply penetrated their hearts, filled them with penitential ſorrow, and induced them to turn to the Lord whom they had greatly provoked. —Though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Iſrael acknowledge us not as his children, yet thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; we are called by thy name. Like the children of Iſrael, we have revolted from thee, and now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay after this, for we have tranſgreſſed thy commandments? Aſhamed of our undutiful conduct, and deſirous to be reſtored to favour, we earneſtly intreat that thou wilt turn us, and we ſhall be turned. When thou ſayeſt, Yet return again unto me, we reply, Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.

7 For in that day every man ſhall caſt away his idols of ſilver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you *for* a ſin.

Having called his fellow citizens to the practice of their indiſpenſible duty, our Prophet proceeds to foretel the happy effects which were to reſult from their return to God, and obedience to his authority. Senſible of their extreme folly and complicated guilt, in having followed lying vanities and forſaken their own mercy, they were to abandon, with juſt indignation, the atrocious ſins wherein they had indulged. Of this deſirable change they were to exhibit the moſt ſubſtantial proofs, by rejecting with deteſtation

* Chap. v. 23.

tation the idols which they had formerly worſhipped. It is worthy of notice, that this becoming conduct was to be adopted, not merely by a few individuals, but by the great bulk of thoſe who had been addicted to idolatry. Every man ſhall caſt away his idols of ſilver and gold; though made of the moſt valuable materials, to attract the greater admiration and reſpect; though formed by their own hands, a circumſtance which might contribute to increaſe their attachment to them; yet they were to be rejected with diſdain, and thrown away as objects of contempt. Such are the fruits of genuine repentance toward God, which, at the period referred to, were to appear among the tribes of Iſrael.—Is it not ſurpriſing, that ever ſince man's firſt apoſtacy from God, all the nations of the earth, the Iſraelites not excepted, have diſcovered a perverſe inclination to honour the creature, even the works of their own hands, more than the Creator! Notwithſtanding his eternal power and Godhead may be underſtood by the things that are made, notwithſtanding he hath not left himſelf without witneſs of his goodneſs and beneficence, in giving rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons; men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible creatures. So ſtrong is the propenſity, that to disjoin them from idols, and to turn them to ſerve the living and true God, the goſpel muſt come to them, not in word, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt.

8 Then ſhall the Aſſyrian fall with the ſword, not of a mighty man; and the ſword not of a mean man ſhall devour him: but he ſhall flee from the ſword, and his young men ſhall be diſcomfited.

The dreadful ſlaughter and entire diſcomfiture of the Aſſyrian army, by the irreſiſtible power of Jehovah, is the ſubject of this prediction. The moſt high

high God was not only to defend his people from the hoſtile deſigns of their implacable adverſaries, but to lay them proſtrate on the ground, in the ſight of thoſe whom they meditated to deſtroy. The troops which marched againſt Jeruſalem were to be entirely routed, ſo that they ſhould not be able to execute the enterpriſe which they had formed againſt that city. This wonderful event was not to proceed from the ſword or military proweſs of a mighty or of a mean man, or of any man whatever. Not human, but divine power, was to be employed in executing this direful deſtruction. The angel of the Lord ſent forth for this purpoſe was the agent who cut off and totally defeated the Aſſyrian army, according to the prediction of Hoſea, 'I will have 'mercy on the houſe of Judah, and will ſave them 'by the Lord their God, and will not ſave them by 'bow, nor by ſword, nor by battle, by horſes, nor 'by horſemen *.'—*But he ſhall flee from the ſword.* Senacherib king of Aſſyria, who is doubtleſs the perſon of whom the Prophet ſpeaks, ſtruck with conſternation and terror at the rapid devaſtation made among his officers and ſoldiers, was to flee with the remains of his forces, that eſcaped the avenging hand of the angel of the Lord, into his own country, terrified leſt he and his followers might ſhare in the general calamity.—*And his young men ſhall be diſcomfited.* The ſtouteſt and moſt courageous of his troops, who were moſt remarkable for intrepidity and valour, overwhelmed by fear and diſmay, were to ſeek for ſafety by a precipitate flight; in their way homeward they were to be diſperſed, and many of them to periſh.—O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: Let God ariſe; let his enemies be ſcattered; let them alſo that hate him flee before him; as ſmoke is driven, drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, let the wicked periſh at the preſence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God, who giveth ſtrength and ſalvation to his people.

9 And

* Chap. i. 7.

9 And he ſhall paſs over to his ſtrong hold for fear, and his princes ſhall be afraid of the enſign, ſaith the LORD, whoſe fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jeruſalem.

The prophetic deſcription of the entire defeat of the Aſſyrians, is here continued, and the abſolute certainty of the event is ſolemnly confirmed. Senacherib, abaſhed by the terrible havock made among his forces, and confounded at the view of his deplorable condition, paſſing the frontiers of his dominions, was to ſeek for refuge in the firſt fortreſs he could reach, where he might think to enjoy a ſafe retreat.—Accordingly, hiſtory relates that this proud vain-glorious monarch, diſtreſſed by extreme timidity, and inflamed with exceſſive rage, did not halt until he arrived at the ſtrong city of Nineveh, where he had a citadel and a palace. During his reſidence there, his tyranny and cruelty having become intolerable, he was ſlain with the ſword by his two ſons, when employed in doing homage to Niſroch his god. —*And his princes ſhall be afraid of the enſign.* The great men and the officers who had narrowly eſcaped the general calamity, were afterward terribly frighted on ſeeing an enſign or ſtandard, which reminded them of their once perilous circumſtances, or alarmed them leſt it might have proved a ſignal to purſue and deſtroy the ſhattered remains of the diſperſed army to which they belonged.—The prediction thus concludes:

Saith the Lord, who poſſeſſes omnipotence and faithfulneſs to accompliſh his promiſes and threatenings, and who will not fail to do as he hath ſaid. —*Whoſe fire is in Zion*, continually burning upon the altar which is placed in the ſacred temple, built by divine appointment on the mountain which bears that name. Or the expreſſion may allude to the peculiar people of God inhabiting that mountain, who, in prophetic language, are ſometimes ſpoken of under this ſymbol. The houſe of Jacob, ſaith Obadiah,

Obadiah, ſhall be a fire, not only to communicate light and warmth unto the world around them; but to conſume the wicked, who are compared to droſs and ſtubble. In this ſenſe, alſo, the fire of the Lord was in Zion; and the Aſſyrians who had formed the deſign of extinguiſhing it, were ſlain and deſtroyed.—*And his furnace in Jeruſalem.* A furnace is fitted up for the purpoſe of melting gold, ſilver, and other uſeful metals, in order to ſeparate them from the alloy with which they are intermixed, and to prepare them for the different uſes to which they may be applied. In this view, it ſignificantly repreſents thoſe trying afflictions whereby God is pleaſed to purify his people from their corruptions, to divide the precious from the vile; thoſe who on account of their excellence and purity reſemble choice ſilver, from thoſe who are worthleſs and contemptible, like the worſt refuſe. In Jeruſalem this furnace was kindled by the fire of divine wrath, in order to refine the inhabitants from thoſe heterogeneous mixtures of hypocriſy and wickedneſs which ſpoiled their beauty and utility. With this peculiar deſcription of the character of Jehovah, the firſt part of this prophetical diſcourſe concludes, in which the upright ſervants of the Moſt High are aſſured of perfect ſafety, even in perilous circumſtances, and the utter deſtruction of their formidable enemies is foretold. When aſſailed by their potent adverſaries, God will be their friend; when ſtraitened, he will grant them enlargement; when in jeopardy, he will ſend them deliverance.—Let us then unite in ſinging the triumphant ſong of the ſervant of the Lord, compoſed in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, which ends thus: 'I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among 'the heathen, and ſing praiſes unto thy name. 'Great deliverance giveth he to his king, and ſhew-'eth mercy to his anointed, to David and to his 'ſeed for evermore *.'

PRELIMI-

* Pſal. xviii. 49, 50.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE now proceed to conſider the ſecond part of this prophetic oration, contained in the chapter before us. It commences with a graphical deſcription of the important benefits to be enjoyed by the people of God, under the auſpicious reign of an illuſtrious, pious prince, the equity of whoſe government, and the felicity of whoſe ſubjects, are highly celebrated, ver. 1, 2.—It foretels, in beautiful figurative language, the converſion of many to a prudent diſcrimination of the ways of God, and the excellency of ſpiritual objects, v. 3, 8.—It repreſents in ſtrong colours the terrible calamities whereby the Jewiſh nation were to be diſtreſſed, v. 9, 14.—After which, it enumerates ſome of the precious bleſſings which, in ſubſequent periods, were to be conferred on the church; ſuch as the effuſion of the Spirit, the converſion of the Gentiles, the righteouſneſs, the peace, and the happineſs of the people of God. Theſe topics we purpoſe to diſcuſs in the order in which they are here placed.

CHAP. XXXII.

BEHOLD, a king ſhall reign in righteouſneſs, and princes ſhall rule in judgment.

Theſe words contain a ſhort pleaſing deſcription of the proſperous adminiſtration of an eminent prince, renowned for the equity of his government. His amiable character, and that of his princes, is delineated in terms truly ſignificant.—The ſubject is introduced in a manner admirably ſuited to excite the cloſeſt attention, *Behold a king*. Contemplate with ſuitable emotions of mind, one poſſeſſed of royal magnificence

nificence and ſplendour. See an illuſtrious perſon inveſted with a crown, dignified with a ſceptre, elevated to a throne, exalted to ſupreme dominion, exerciſing ſovereign authority, holding extenſive property, preſiding over a numerous people, whoſe liberty, proſperity, and tranquillity are eſtabliſhed by the clemency and juſtice of the monarch. View him enjoying all the prerogatives belonging to royalty; magnificence, riches, power, retinue, with the dutiful homage of loyal ſubjects; and diſplaying from time to time the moſt ſplendid triumphs. Fix your thoughts eſpecially on the rectitude of his government—*Who ſhall reign in righteouſneſs.* The word is emphatical, denoting that he ſhall exhibit every virtue which can adorn the royal character, and contribute to the felicity of his kingdom. He ſhall uſe the prerogatives of majeſty with great moderation, wiſdom, and equity; he ſhall perform toward his ſubjects the duties of a wiſe legiſlator, a juſt ruler, a kind parent, and upright judge; exhibiting before them laudable examples of piety and virtue, of goodneſs and beneficence. In all the affairs of government, he ſhall act with clemency and equanimity, he ſhall do juſtice with impartiality, he ſhall diſtribute judgment without corruption throughout his dominions, having no reſpect to perſons. What an ineſtimable bleſſing is ſuch a prince, not only to the nation over which he reigns, but to the church, and to the world! How extenſive the benign influence of his authority and example, who hath at heart the welfare of his people, who adopts the beſt meaſures to ſuppreſs deceit, violence, and all manner of iniquity; to maintain the ſafety of the empire, to enrich and felicitate all who live under his government.

Do you aſk of whom ſpeaketh the Prophet? Had he in his view any particular prince, when delivering this prediction? Hezekiah king of Judah ſeems to have been the illuſtrious monarch primarily intended; concerning whom it is written,

'He

'He truſted in the Lord God of Iſrael, ſo that after him was none like him among all the kings 'of Judah, nor any that were before him. For 'he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which 'the Lord commanded Moſes. And the Lord 'was with him, and he proſpered *,' &c. He was a king that reigned in righteouſneſs during the whole time he ſat upon the throne of Judah, eſpecially after the remarkable period wherein he was miraculouſly delivered from the threatening power of Aſſyria, and had a wonderful recovery from a mortal diſeaſe which brought him to the gates of death. By theſe memorable events, God was pleaſed to honour him in the ſight of all nations, and to bring him under peculiar obligations to the mild and righteous adminiſtration of his regal power. Placed by divine Providence over a great nation, in his official character, this prediction received a partial accompliſhment, whilſt, in his public capacity, he exhibited an inſtructive type of a more glorious monarch, who preſides over a more extenſive and powerful kingdom. You eaſily perceive that Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, the promiſed Meſſiah, is the great perſonage in whom this prophecy had its full accompliſhment.—If the literal ſenſe above mentioned is admitted, I do not ſee why the ſpiritual interpretation ſhould be rejected. Our Prophet, who had ſpoken of the Meſſiah as a high prieſt and divine inſtructor, here preſents him to view as the king who is ſeated on the holy hill of Zion, of whom he ſaw in good king Hezekiah, an eminent figure and repreſentation. Jeſus Chriſt is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; the Prince of the kings of the earth; the glorious, omnipotent, gracious, univerſal Monarch, whoſe kingdom is not of this world. It is ſpiritual, heavenly, unlimited, and eternal. It is an adminiſtration of mercy and righteouſneſs; it is the empire of grace and love; it is a diſpenſation of wiſdom and order, which extends its in-

* 2 Kings xviii. 5, 6, 7.

fluence to the whole univerſe, and which ſhall exiſt through immortal ages. Under this Almighty Sovereign, kings reign and princes decree juſtice: He exerciſeth ſupreme dominion in heaven and earth; he rules in the midſt of his enemies; he controuls every adverſe power, and reigns over his innumerable happy ſubjects *in righteouſneſs*. He is emphatically denominated the Juſt One, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous. He loveth righteouſneſs, and hateth iniquity; therefore God anointed him with the oil of gladneſs above his fellows; the ſceptre of his kingdom is a ſceptre of righteouſneſs. His laws and judgments are true and righteous altogether; he ſpeaks, he doth judge, and make war in righteouſneſs. He communicates abundance of the gift of righteouſneſs unto all his people, making his grace to reign through righteouſneſs unto eternal life; and at the final judgment he will render to every one according to his works.—Who is there among you that deſireth to enjoy the moſt agreeable tranquillity, and perfect ſecurity from evil? let him reſort to the banner of this bleſſed potentate, and place himſelf under his protection. In him he ſhall find peace and ſerenity of mind, and know by experience, that the name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower, to which the righteous run and are ſafe.

And princes ſhall rule in judgment. The nobles and chief officers of ſtate, who held the higheſt places of truſt and authority under the king, were to adminiſter the government committed to them, with an unbiaſſed reſpect to equity and judgment. They were to exerciſe their ſeveral functions, not with rigour and ſeverity, but with mildneſs and mercy, according to the dictates of well-informed conſciences, and the unerring ſtandard of truth and juſtice. Poſſeſſing accurate knowledge of the duties belonging to their high ſtation, maintaining ſtrict regard to the laws of righteouſneſs, and firmly attached to the intereſts of thoſe over whom they preſided, they would endeavour to diſcover the true ſtate of the

matters

matters brought before them for deciſion; that they might puniſh evil doers, and redreſs the grievances of thoſe who had been injured. Acting in this manner with integrity and probity, they would acquire great reſpectability among the people; they would become uſeful ornaments to the ſtate, and prove acceptable to the Lord, who loveth them that follow after righteouſneſs.—Such, in ſome meaſure, were the princes appointed by good king Hezekiah, to occupy the places of power and emolument in his dominions. Theſe illuſtrious men, imitating the pious example of their ſovereign, like that eminent man of God, followed after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs. With him they concurred in acts of devotion, and in the great work of reformation; with him they bleſſed the Lord and his people Iſrael, and in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord *.—The prediction which was thus literally verified, hath a more full completion in thoſe who are raiſed from the duſt by the King of kings, that he may ſet them with the princes of his people, who are elevated to diſtinguiſhed dignity, poſſeſſed of a noble ſpirit, and conſtituted a royal prieſthood, that they may miniſter unto the Lord of the whole earth. Such are true Chriſtians in general, eſpecially paſtors according to God's own heart, and miniſters of the goſpel, who are advanced by their Lord to honourable ſtations in the church. Faithful men of this deſcription, who are made princes in all the earth, as here foretold, rule with judgment and diſcretion, according to the will of God, their own ſpirits and tongues; they govern their conduct, and manage the affairs committed to their truſt, ſo that God in all things may be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt.

2 And a man ſhall be as an hiding place from

* See 2 Chron. xxx. 12. and xxxi. 8.

from the wind, and a covert from the tempeſt; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land.

The peculiar excellence and benign influence of the auguſt perſonage mentioned in the preceding verſes, is in theſe words emphatically deſcribed by ſeveral beautiful alluſions.—In this preſent world, the people of God are expoſed to various evils, ſome of which aſſault their perſons, others diſtreſs their minds. Againſt both theſe the Lord their God is graciouſly pleaſed to aſſure them of defence. Like the children of Iſrael, ſome of them are aſſailed literally by the ſtormy wind and the tempeſt; others are afflicted with drought and conſequent ſcarcity; whilſt a third claſs are troubled with fatigue and laſſitude, under the preſſure of accumulated diſtreſſes. Now when individuals or ſocieties are thus oppreſſed by diverſe calamities, the Lord according to this promiſe, raiſes up a renowned prince, or ſome perſon of conſiderable eminence; to reſcue from impending ruin, the oppreſſed and the perplexed among his people; to cover them from the rude blaſts that threaten to injure them, as the houſe protects from the ſtorm the inhabitants who ſit under its roof; to impart to them agreeable refreſhment, as the waters of the flowing brook quenches the thirſt of the forlorn traveller, and to preſerve them from the ſcorching heat that threatened to conſume, as effectually as the rocks and banks of ſand prevent the land from being inundated by the boiſterous waves of the ſea. Thus God in the courſe of his providence, manifeſts his tender mercy toward his people, in conveying from the fulneſs of his all-ſufficiency ſeaſonable relief, perfectly adapted to their various neceſſities.—In Hezekiah, the pious, prudent, illuſtrious king of Judah, the predictions under conſideration were literally fulfilled. In that eminent man, the ſervants of God who had been haraſſed and vexed under the former reign, found a hiding place, a

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covert, and a ſhadow, from thoſe commotions, oppreſſions, perſecutions, and vexations, which they had experienced. By means of his truſt in God, his fervent prayers, and his wiſe conduct; he proved like a place of ſecurity, when the ſtorm of the Aſſyrian power beat upon them with conſiderable fury. The abundance of ſalutary inſtructions which he cauſed to be adminiſtered to his ſubjects, and the large meaſures of ſacred conſolations which he was ſolicitous they ſhould enjoy, who had formerly been reduced to great ſtraits, were refreſhing as rivers of water in a dry place. In ſubſequent periods, the church, when diſtreſſed by threatening calamities, hath remarkably experienced the accompliſhment of this prophecy. Such ſeems to be the literal import and primary accompliſhment of the prediction, which there is reaſon to believe, purpoſely incloſes another, a ſpiritual, and ſtill more important ſenſe. This I proceed to inveſtigate, and to ſhew how it ultimately obtains its object and end.

While our Prophet was immediately employed in foretelling the occurrences of the Jewiſh nation, it is probable, the Holy Spirit, by whom he was inſpired, did enlarge his views, and bear out his expreſſions beyond theſe objects, to the perſon and diſpenſation of Jeſus Chriſt. Indeed the predictions before us are ſo conſtructed, as perfectly to ſuit the diſpenſation of grace they were given to atteſt, and fully to juſtify the application of them to the Redeemer of mankind, and Prince of Peace. To him they ſeem chiefly to refer, and in this view ſignificantly repreſent the ſpiritual benefits which he imparts to the minds of his faithful ſubjects. He is the man whoſe name is the Branch; who, concerning the fleſh, deſcended from the fathers, was born of a woman, took part of human nature, and appeared in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh. Of this man Chriſt Jeſus it is affirmed, that he *ſhall be a hiding place*, &c. The wind of temptation ſometimes blows with great violence, overturns hypocritical profeſſors,

profeſſors, with all their towering hopes, and threatens, by its mighty influence, to injure the people of God. In this hazardous condition, the Son of man ſhall be a hiding place, where thoſe who reſort to him ſhall find an agreeable retreat, be ſcreened from the rage of their malignant ſpiritual enemies, and elude the ſubtle ſtratagems of thoſe who aim at their deſtruction. The tempeſt of noiſy reproach, alarming diſtreſs, uniting with the turbulence of a preſent evil world, and awful apprehenſions of the divine diſpleaſure, occaſionally terrifies even good men, and excites painful commotions in their minds. When agitated by ſuch a combination of evils, Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be a covert to protect from the dreadful conſequences, which may be apprehended to ariſe from ſuch a portentuous ſtorm, and to avert the tokens of God's anger. Under this ſhelter, the triumphant exclamation is adopted, 'If God be for us, 'who ſhall be againſt us?'—In a dry place, where the ſervants of God are unhappily deprived of the word, and ordinances of divine inſtitution; where they enjoy not intimate intercourſe with one another, nor thoſe refreſhing communications which proceed from the fountain of life; whilſt their ſouls thirſt for God, and their fleſh longeth for him in a thirſty land—In this unpleaſant languiſhing ſtate, the King who reigns in righteouſneſs ſhall be as rivers of waters; he ſhall afford clear diſcoveries of his all-ſufficient fulneſs, from whence he will convey rich abundance in conſtant ſucceſſion, to ſupply all their neceſſities, and to give them deſirable refreſhment. When feeble, deſponding, and weary in their minds, through the burden of ſin, and tired with inconveniences, perplexities, hardſhips, and labours—the man Chriſt Jeſus ſhall be as the ſhadow of a great rock, which is moſt refreſhing in a hot country, not only as it perfectly excludes the rays of the ſun, but as it has in itſelf a natural coolneſs, which it communicates to every thing about it. All who have recourſe to him he defends from the fiery darts of the evil one,

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the ſcorching heat of perſecution, and the wrath of the Almighty, which burneth as an oven. In him they ſhall find ſecurity, ſatisfaction, and comfort.—Such is the ſpiritual import of the prediction contained in this verſe; and ſuch is the fulfilment of it in the joyful experience of the ſaints. So exuberant is the kindneſs of God, that whatever be our ſtraits and diſtreſſes, he hath opened channels by which plentiful ſtreams inceſſantly flow, to ſupply all our wants, according to his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus. For the deſtitute, raiment is provided; to the thirſty, refreſhment is promiſed; to the diſtreſſed, a ſovereign remedy is offered; to the dejected, comfort is adminiſtered; for the poor in ſpirit, true riches are laid up. If then any of you are troubled with ſtrong temptations, with complicated afflictions, and are weary of your iniquities, repair, without delay, to the great Mediator, the man Chriſt Jeſus; who is the glory of God, the ornament of creation, and the friend of ſinners: Take ſhelter in his providence, righteouſneſs, grace, and promiſes, which will prove a compleat covert from every evil, and which will yield you perpetual ſafety and conſolation.

3 And the eyes of them that ſee ſhall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear ſhall hearken.

Of the peculiar privileges to be enjoyed by the ſubjects of the King who reigns in righteouſneſs: The firſt mentioned is ſpiritual illumination, and diligent attention to divine truths. Worldly riches, honours and power, are not enumerated among the diſtinguiſhing prerogatives whereby they were to be felicitated; but the perfection of their powers and faculties, and their regular exerciſe upon their proper objects, are placed at the head of the account.—To interpret the words in the literal ſenſe, as referring to mens bodily ſight, and the preſervation of the organs of viſion beyond the ordinary period wherein

wherein they begin to fail, would make them expreſs what ſeems inconſiſtent with truth, and the deſign of the Spirit of prophecy. Who ever heard of the ſubjects of any ſovereign, whoſe eyes did not grow dim after they had attained to old age? The patriarchs, Iſaac and Iſrael, did not enjoy exemption from this preſage of approaching diſſolution; and their poſterity could not expect to poſſeſs more ſignal benefits than their fathers. The eyes that ſee muſt therefore be explained, as denoting the eyes of the underſtanding, which have been opened to behold wondrous things out of God's law, and to perceive the beauty, the excellence, and glory of divine objects. Theſe enlightened eyes of the mind *ſhall not be dim*. Inſtead of becoming weak, and failing through long exertion and uſe, they ſhall retain all the powers of accute ſpiritual diſcernment of which they were ever poſſeſſed. More is intended than what is expreſſed. Their minds illuminated by the word and Spirit of God, far from decaying in capacity and vigour, ſhall continue accurately to diſtinguiſh truth from error, good from evil; to prove what is the good and perfect will of God; to turn away from things odious, and to contemplate with pleaſure the things that are truly excellent. The celeſtial light which they behold ſhall never dazzle or weaken their eyes; the path of the juſt ſhall be as the ſhining light, that with increaſing ſplendor ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

And the ears of them that hear ſhall hearken. The perſons here ſpoken of are deſcribed, not from the agreeable ſtate of the outward organs of hearing, which receive the impreſſions made upon them by external ſounds. This prediction, like the former, muſt be underſtood in a figurative ſenſe, repreſenting the peculiar happineſs of thoſe men whoſe hearts the Lord hath opened to attend to things which belong to their peace. The Lord hath opened their ears, and they are not rebellious, but ſolicitous to obey his voice. Such people ſhall hearken, they

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ſhall eagerly liſten to the inſtructions of wiſdom, they ſhall receive them with pleaſure and gratitude; they ſhall clearly underſtand them; they ſhall cordially believe, and chearfully obey them. I ſuppoſe that the expreſſion muſt be taken here in its full import. When people requeſt that God may hear their prayers, they deſire that he would be attentive to them, that he would graciouſly regard and grant their petitions. In like manner, when God by his ſervant foretels that his people ſhall hearken to his word, he declares that they ſhall be intenſely employed in the vigorous exerciſe of their active powers, in attending with an obedient ear and willing hearts, to obſerve his truths and ways.—Earneſtly intreat, brethren, that Almighty God may accompliſh this prophecy to you, by giving you juſt perceptions of the comparative worth of natural, moral, and ſpiritual objects; that your ſenſes may be exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil—That you may be enabled to diſcover the difference betwixt true grace and its counterfeit; betwixt truth and error; betwixt things more and leſs valuable; betwixt things called indifferent, and thoſe that are truly excellent—That he may diſpel your ignorance and prejudices; remove your impenitence and unbelief; ſubdue your pride and paſſions, and diſpoſe you to attend diligently to the things ſpoken that accompany ſalvation, and ſo ſeal your inſtruction, that you may ever keep his holy word.

4 The heart alſo of the raſh ſhall underſtand knowledge; and the tongue of the ſtammerers ſhall be ready to ſpeak plainly.

Other important benefits are here predicted to be conferred on the ſubjects of the King who reigns in righteouſneſs; by which a thorough change is produced in their temper and practice. That God may magnify himſelf and diſplay his glory, he is pleaſed, in many inſtances, to convert thoſe who ſeem

leaſt adapted to execute the purpoſes he hath in view. We may ſuppoſe the aged, the great, and the learned, are the moſt proper inſtruments to perfect his praiſe; whereas he pitches upon babes and ſucklings, who, to human appearance, ſeem not in any way fitted for this ſervice. The raſh, the haſty, and inconſiderate, who commonly poſſeſs little diſcretion and judgment, and ſpeak unadviſedly of the truths and diſpenſations of God, are not likely to attain underſtanding and knowledge; but according to this prediction, the event ſhall prove the reverſe of what might be expected.—The character of the raſh, originates in a thoughtleſs, haſty natural temper, which diſcovers itſelf eſpecially in young people; and being early contracted, is confirmed by bad habits, which are not eaſily corrected. In conſequence of its pernicious influence, precipitate judgments are formed and expreſſed, not only concerning human affairs, but with reſpect to the divine conduct, and the operations of the providence and Spirit of God; a very ſmall part of which come under our cognizance. Though in great meaſure unacquainted with the order, the connection, and deſign eſtabliſhed by infinite wiſdom, they raſhly adopt ſentiments highly injurious to the great Lord of all, which they inconſiderately endeavour to diſſeminate and ſupport.

Of ſuch it is foretold, *their heart ſhall underſtand knowledge*. Thoſe who of all other men, were moſt unlikely to attain diſtinct acquaintance with important ſubjects, which require to be inveſtigated with much care and ſerious attention, ſhall be ſo intirely changed, as to form a ſober, deliberate, wiſe judgment, of thoſe intereſting topics, of which they formerly had very ſuperficial, erroneous ideas. With coolneſs and compoſure, they ſhall inquire into the cauſes, the nature, and the effects of thoſe diſpenſations of providence and grace, of which, without heſitation, they formerly pronounced a raſh and wrong judgment. Nor were they merely to acquire ſome degree of confuſed acquaintance with momentous

tous matters, but in the exercise of renovated intellectual powers, they should attain a thorough knowledge, and clear understanding of them.——Beware of that rashness and precipitancy, from which the persons spoken of derived their character, lest it may betray you into innumerable inconveniences, sins, and dangers. Maturely consider the various subjects that demand your attention; and study to think, and speak, and act, with prudence and deliberation. He that believeth shall not make haste to form his sentiments, to express his judgment, or to adopt the measures he is to pursue.

The tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. Those who stammer, or have an impediment in their speech, express themselves with some difficulty, they cannot utter their sentiments plainly and fluently, and sometimes are hardly understood by those with whom they converse. By this defect and embarassment in speech, the persons here intended are characterised. They are incapable of speaking distinctly and intelligibly on matters even of the greatest moment; and when they attempt to say any thing on topics of this nature, they communicate their thoughts with much perplexity and confusion. In discoursing on the attributes, words, and providence of God, they cannot speak plainly and with perspicuity; but in an undigested, disorderly, and uncertain manner.—Concerning people of this description, when brought into subjection to him who reigneth in righteousness, it is foretold, that *they shall be ready to speak plainly.* Contemplating the divine glory, partaking of divine grace, having their defects removed, their faculties renewed and invigorated; they were to become very different persons from what they had been in times past. Not only their eyes and ears were to be opened, but they were to become intelligent people, whose tongues should no longer faulter through ignorance and uncertainty; but express with clearness and facility, yea, with beauty and propriety, the wonderful

wonderful works of Jehovah. As it is written in David's Pſalms of praiſe, 'They ſhall ſpeak of the 'might of thy terrible acts—they ſhall abundantly 'utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, and ſhall 'ſing of thy righteouſneſs *.'—Permit me to call upon you in the words of the apoſtle Paul, 'to uſe 'great plainneſs of ſpeech,' in your communications one with another, eſpecially when you treat of the oracles of God. Take heed that you do not darken counſel by words without knowledge, and incur the cenſure paſſed upon an obſcure writer, 'That he did 'not wiſh to be underſtood.' Speak your mind with openneſs, candour, and freedom; in words of determined ſignification, that may not perplex, but elucidate the ſubject, and ſerve to the uſe of edifying, and of miniſtering grace to the hearers.

5 The vile perſon ſhall be no more called liberal, nor the churl ſaid *to be* bountiful.

At the period to which this prophecy refers, the true character of thoſe who had aſſumed deluſive appearances was to be diſcovered, and thenceforward they were to be called by their proper names. Impiety and wickedneſs were not to be covered by hypocriſy, nor to wear undetected the maſk of diſſimulation. Men were to be eſtimated according to a juſt ſtandard, proper diſcrimination was to be made betwixt virtue and vice, betwixt good and bad people.—The vile perſon of whom our Prophet ſpeaks, is impious, wicked, and profane; poſſeſſing a mean, ſordid diſpoſition: Having imbibed pernicious ſentiments concerning God, his word and providence; he treats things ſacred with deriſion and contempt; he ſpeaks lies, and works deceit; endeavouring to do all the miſchief to ſociety that is in his power. It is unneceſſary at preſent to draw the portrait at greater length, as I ſhall have occaſion more fully to delineate the character, when diſcourſing

* Pſal. cxlv. 6, 7.

courſing from the ſixth verſe.—Such a one ſhall no more be called *liberal:* The word denotes a man of an upright heart and good conſcience, who forms honourable ſentiments reſpecting the works and ways of God, who loves and practices whatſoever is good, and generous, and laudable. I reſerve the farther illuſtration of this character until I ſhall conſider ver. 8. where it is more fully deſcribed. I only obſerve at preſent, that it forms a perfect contraſt to that which is firſt mentioned.—It is added, *nor the churl ſaid to be bountiful.* The churl is a ſordid, illiberal, niggardly creature, who is penurious in the extreme, anxious to amaſs wealth, and averſe to part with any thing that he poſſeſſes. Such a one was Nabal, of whom it is written, that 'he was churliſh 'and evil in his doings *:' So accurate was to be the diſcrimination of characters, that a perſon of this temper ſhould not be reckoned bountiful, generous, and munificent, open hearted and open handed, willing to diſtribute according to his ability and opportunity, and ready to communicate to ſupply the neceſſities of the indigent.

Theſe ſeveral claſſes of people were not to be miſrepreſented, or miſtaken the one for the other. Falſe reports concerning ſome of them might notwithſtanding be ſpread abroad by the flatterers of the worſe ſort, who ſoothed them in their folly. Nabal, though extremely parſimonious, held a feaſt in his houſe, like the feaſt of a king; and it is not improbable that thoſe who ſhared in the magnificent entertainment, might extol him for his liberality, and exhibit him in an improper light. Though particular inſtances of this ſort might occur on ſome occaſions, the prediction plainly declares what in general was to take place when it ſhould be fulfilled. And a moſt important, deſirable benefit it foretels; for many of the troubles and calamities which embitter human life, and poiſon its comforts, ariſe from miſtaken views of thoſe with whom we are connected

* 1 Sam. xxv. 3.

nected in ſociety. It muſt therefore be of great moment to the happineſs of the church, that theſe errors be rectified, and a juſt eſtimate formed of the real ſtate and temper of the individuals compoſing the kingdom of God.

In the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah, the prophecy contained in this and the two preceding verſes received a partial fulfilment. Under the adminiſtration of that upright prince, eſpecially after Almighty God had given clear demonſtrations of his favour for Jeruſalem, and of his righteouſneſs in the deſtruction of their enemies—The eyes of them who poſſeſſed ſpiritual diſcernment could not fail to perceive the convincing proofs exhibited of the paternal care, and gracious protection, which the Lord exerciſeth over his peculiar people; and thus their faith in the providence and promiſes of God would be happily confirmed. The ears of them that heard theſe teſtimonies of divine regard fairly repreſented, muſt have liſtened to them with attention, admiration, and gratitude. Thoſe who had formerly been haſty and precipitate in delivering their opinions of the conduct of Providence toward his people, about the time of the Aſſyrian invaſion, would adopt a more ſober and juſt judgment of the wiſdom and goodneſs of the divine procedure. In the moſt intelligible and explicit manner, they would declare the wonderful works of Jehovah, and celebrate the praiſes of their great deliverer. Under the government of a monarch renowned for piety and virtue, a proper diſtinction would be made between men of oppoſite characters, ſo as to prevent fatal miſtakes on a ſubject in which the public welfare was deeply intereſted.—Theſe events, to which this prophecy had probably an immediate reference, were more fully accompliſhed, after the potent adverſaries of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt were vanquiſhed by his merciful interpoſition, and his church delivered from the hands of their enemies. Then the eyes of thoſe who had their underſtandings opened, clearly

clearly diſcerned and contemplated with increaſing pleaſure, the ſpiritual objects preſented to their view. Their ears were alſo open to attend diligently to the things ſpoken concerning the ſalvation of God. They well underſtood, and could ſpeak plainly, the great things which God had done, that relate to the myſteries of his kingdom. And to this day is this prophecy fulfilled in our ears.

6 For the vile perſon will ſpeak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practiſe hypocriſy, and to utter error againſt the LORD, to make empty the ſoul of the hungry; and he will cauſe the drink of the thirſty to fail.

In this and the two verſes which immediately follow, the characters mentioned in the preceding verſe are more fully delineated.—As to the converſation of the vile perſon, *he will ſpeak villany*. Wickedneſs is ſo odious, that it often aſſumes a maſk; it retires into ſecrecy, and ſeeks the cover of darkneſs. The greateſt crimes have been ſilently perpetrated in the dark, and afterward have been varniſhed over with fair pretexts, to prevent their atrocity from being diſcovered. The vile perſon comes forth from theſe concealments, breaks through every reſtraint, and impudently boaſts of his criminal actions.—With reſpect to his *heart*, it *will work iniquity*; all its powers and faculties are employed in this deteſtable buſineſs. In itſelf deceitful and deſperately wicked, it deviſes all manner of ſin; its deſires are excited, its inclinations are determined, to execute its iniquitous projects. Thus employed, it operates all manner of wickedneſs, in which it becomes daily more habituated and confirmed.—*To practiſe hypocriſy*. He aſſumes the appearance of what in truth he is not, and makes unfounded high pretenſions to what he is an entire ſtranger. Like an actor upon the ſtage, who puts on the dreſs and the air of a prince, and, though himſelf mean and indigent, ſuſtains

tains the character of ſome great perſonage; ſo the vile perſon, who hath a divided heart and double mind, endeavours to conceal his true character, and oſtentatiouſly pretends to do the good which he never did, and to which he is altogether averſe.—*And to utter error againſt the Lord.* One ſin imperceptibly leads to the commiſſion of another. The heart that worketh iniquity wiſhes to be ſcreened from deteſtation and contempt; under the cover of hypocriſy and deceit, it naturally leads into errors reſpecting the moſt important topics, ſuch as the nature, the attributes, the providence, and the word of God; and after errors are preſumptuouſly adopted, they are propagated with avidity, and every where blazed abroad with bad intention.—*To make empty the ſoul*, &c. The word of God is the food and the refreſhment which ſatisfies the deſires, invigorates the minds of the ſaints, and conveys nouriſhment, ſupport, and conſolation to their ſouls, in thoſe ſeaſons wherein they are moſt apt to become feeble and languid. Now the vile perſon aims, by diſſimulation and error, to miſrepreſent the providence and the oracles of God, and to deprive his people of that ſpiritual proviſion which ſatisfies their ſouls, and gratifies their deſires, which imparts ſtrength and comfort to their hearts. For this purpoſe, he endeavours, in various ways, to raiſe doubts and ſuſpicions concerning the truth of the ſcriptures, the wiſdom and equity of the diſpenſations of providence and grace; and conſequently to bereave them of the ſacred ſources of all their conſolations in adverſity, and to take away what they moſt highly value, and experience to be moſt neceſſary and uſeful. Than ſuch conduct hardly any thing can be more flagitious and wicked, more impious and deteſtable.

7 The inſtruments alſo of the churl *are* evil; he deviſeth wicked devices, to deſtroy the

the poor with lying words, even when the needy ſpeaketh right.

The means employed by the niggardly and the covetous, to accompliſh their inſidious deſigns, are truly bad, treacherous, and abominable; deſerving to be reprobated in the ſtrongeſt terms. Such are corrupt principles, deluſive reaſonings, ſpecious pretexts, crafty counſels, whereby they diſcover criminal contempt of the word and ways of God, and impoſe upon the unſuſpecting and the credulous. Theſe, all theſe, are evil and dangerous.—*He deviſeth wicked devices.* To do evil is bad, to deviſe evil is ſtill worſe; for, as ſaith the proverb, 'he that 'deviſeth to do evil ſhall be called a miſchievous 'perſon *.' This is the name he juſtly deſerves; which will more fully appear, when we conſider the deſign he hath in view, namely, *to deſtroy the poor*, &c. It is a heinous crime to injure any perſon, whatever be his circumſtances; but it is a proof of ſtill greater depravity, to wrong the poor, who have a juſt claim to aſſiſtance. This deteſtable ſpecies of oppreſſion becomes exceedingly aggravated, when it deliberately contrives, not merely to hurt, but to accompliſh the deſtruction of the needy, and that by means of deceit and falſehood. Above all, the atrocity of this outrageous wickedneſs, committed by the churliſh man, is greatly increaſed by the time and place in which it is perpetrated,—*when the needy ſpeaketh right*, or *in judgment*, as the Hebrew word ſignifies; pleading the juſtice of their cauſe: Even then regardleſs of truth and equity, he tries by force or fraud to deprive them of their juſt rights.—From ſuch men, good Lord deliver us!

8 But the liberal deviſeth liberal things; and by liberal things ſhall he ſtand.

We now turn to contemplate another, a very

* Prov. xxiv. 8.

different character, which forms a complete contraſt to thoſe above deſcribed.—The liberal man, who poſſeſſes a generous and bountiful heart, and who ſhews the benevolence of his temper by good and kind actions, deviſeth liberal things concerning God—that he will grant him wiſdom and prudence to order his affairs with diſcretion, the protection of his providence, the direction of his word, the accompliſhment of his promiſes, the comforts of his preſence, the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, and, in due time, the enjoyment of his glory. He deviſeth liberal things concerning his brethren of mankind in every ſtation and condition in life—that governors ſhall rule in the fear of God; that miniſters of the word ſhall behave themſelves holily, juſtly, and unblameably, ſave themſelves and them that hear them; that parents ſhall be faithful, and children dutiful; that maſters ſhall be juſt, and ſervants obedient; that the rich ſhall be charitable, and the poor humble and thankful; that peace ſhall be within Jeruſalem, and proſperity within her palaces. He deviſeth liberal things concerning his own temporal and ſpiritual intereſts—that he ſhall lack no good thing, but have the moderate chearful uſe of all the benefits he receives; that when dejected and diſquieted, he ſhall have cauſe to praiſe the Lord, who is the health of his countenance; that when in doubt and perplexity, the Lord will be a light to him;—that he ſhall be diſpoſed to do good to all as he hath opportunity; in meekneſs to inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves; to ſupport the weak, to animate the deſponding, to comfort the feeble-minded, and relieve the oppreſſed; and that goodneſs and mercy ſhall follow him all his days.

Such are the liberal things that the liberal man deviſeth; and by theſe *ſhall he ſtand*, or *be eſtabliſhed*, as the word is tranſlated in the margin of ſome bibles. The Moſt High himſelf ſhall eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, and ſettle him on the rock of ages, ſo that he ſhall never be moved. Free from that inconſtancy

conſtancy and inſtability, whereby many are perpetually varying and in a ſtate of continual uncertainty, he ſhall preſerve holy ſerenity of mind, he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart being fixed, truſting in the Lord. Having diſperſed and given to the poor, his generous diſpoſition and liberal donations ſhall eſtabliſh his reputation, and ſecure him the eſteem and good opinion of mankind. Amidſt the fluctuations of ſurrounding objects, he ſhall remain ſtedfaſt in his principles, firm in his profeſſion and reſolutions, unmoved in the faith and obedience of the truth. Thus while the wicked are overthrown, the houſe of the righteous ſhall ſtand.—How greatly diverſified are the characters and purſuits of mankind in every age! How various, how oppoſite the tempers and practices of thoſe mentioned in the few verſes we have laſt conſidered! Some of each ſort were among the Jewiſh people, at the period to which our Prophet refers; and are ſtill to be found among thoſe who bear the name of Chriſtians. Let us carefully diſtinguiſh betwixt the precious, and the vile who are abhorred of good men, and liable to everlaſting ſhame and contempt. Let us cultivate with increaſing aſſiduity the amiable diſpoſitions and conduct of the liberal, with the pleaſing hope that God will eſtabliſh and proſper our humble attempts to advance his glory, and obtain his approbation.

9 ¶ Riſe up, ye women that are at eaſe; hear my voice, ye careleſs daughters; give ear unto my ſpeech.

Our Prophet having repreſented the ſuperior felicity of thoſe who truſted in Jehovah, to that of thoſe who, deſpairing of divine aſſiſtance, placed their confidence in man, ſtops the farther proſecution of this ſubject. Aware that ſinners and hypocrites in Zion might imagine, that, having changed his language, and the topics of diſcourſe, they might, with

with impunity perſiſt in their tranſgreſſions; he addreſſes to them a ſharp reproof, and acquaints them with the certain calamities that awaited them. The perſons to whom this part of the prophetic oration is directed, are *women at eaſe*, and *careleſs daughters*. The Hebrews were accuſtomed to give the names of women and daughters to populous cities and large communities, of which many inſtances occur in the books of the Old Teſtament. We read of the daughter of Babylon, the daughter of Zidon, the daughter of Zion, &c. The deſignation ſignificantly intimates the beauty, the elegance, the effeminacy, and the fruitfulneſs of the inhabitants. In this figurative ſenſe the words under conſideration muſt be underſtood; the women not denoting perſons of the female ſex that were married, but the larger and more ancient cities of Judah; and the daughters, not thoſe that were younger and unmarried, but the leſſer towns and villages, which were in ſome meaſure under the juriſdiction of the cities of greater extent and antiquity. Theſe places are addreſſed, as being at eaſe and careleſs, in a ſtate of tranquillity and ſecurity, undiſturbed by the proſpect of any danger, unalarmed by anxious fears of approaching judgments. This deſcription perfectly agrees with the ſituation and temper of the inhabitants of Judah, at the time immediately preceding the invaſion of that kingdom by the Aſſyrians. It is no leſs applicable to not a few among ourſelves, who are naturally poſſeſſed of an indolent diſpoſition, whoſe minds are benumbed by ſenſuality, who ſeem indifferent to matters of the greateſt importance, and unconcerned about futurity. Permit me to remind you to whom this character belongs; of what deſerves your ſerious attention. Care diſcompoſes and diſtracts the mind, eſpecially when it is extended to a variety of objects; and therefore it is the will of God, that his people for whom he careth, ſhould be without carefulneſs, and caſt all their cares upon him. As there is a forbidden ſolicitude

and

and anxiety, which is offenſive to God, and prejudicial to our beſt intereſts; ſo there is a criminal eaſe and careleſſneſs, which is not leſs pernicious and diſpleaſing in the ſight of God, that ought to be cautiouſly avoided. Be on your guard, I beſeech you, againſt theſe oppoſite extremes; and ſtudy, in dependence upon God, to ſteer the middle courſe, which lies at an equal diſtance from both theſe exceſſes.

Riſe up, hear my voice, &c. Awake from the ſtate of indolence and ſecurity in which you have indulged; lay aſide your thoughtleſs indifference about approaching events; that you may become more active, vigorous, and vigilant, than in times paſt. Ariſe from that torpid inſenſible condition, by continuance in which, you may be involved in ruin; receive, with ſacred reſpect, the meſſage I now bring from God to you; and ſhew your profound veneration for the intimation he is pleaſed to give you of his purpoſes, by a ſuitable practical regard—*Hear my voice.* Stop not your ears at my reproof, but take heed what, and how you hear. Be not like the idols of the heathen, who have ears and hear not. Impreſſed with a juſt ſenſe of the bad effects reſulting from careleſs inattention to the word of God, and of the ſubſtantial benefits that may accrue from hearkening to it as you ought; liſten, with diligent attention, to what I am now about to deliver. The call is repeated and urged—*Give ear unto my ſpeech;* which plainly intimates, that our Prophet was going to ſpeak, not of trivial matters, wherein his hearers were little concerned; but of matters of the greateſt moment, wherein they were deeply intereſted, which were not to be involved in obſcurity, but repreſented with perſpicuity, and eſtabliſhed by ſatisfying evidences. No wonder then that he was ſolicitous that they ſhould hearken with attention and reſpect, to the predictions he was about to utter.—Let us learn from hence, how we ought to hear the word of God delivered to us by his ſervants; not with unaffected indifference, but with

with the cloſeſt attention. It is not enough that we teſtify reverence for the divine authority, by the decent poſture of our bodies; our minds muſt likewiſe be deeply engaged in hearkening to the voice that ſpeaketh to us from heaven. In the words of Jeſus Chriſt, 'He that hath an ear to hear, let him 'hear.' The admonition is rendered more forcible by the organ and the act being joined together by our Saviour. When we ſay we ſaw ſuch an object with our eyes, or heard ſuch a thing with our ears, though we can neither ſee nor hear without theſe organs, yet they are mentioned to give more energy to the expreſſion, and to call forth greater attention from others.

10 Many days and years ſhall ye be troubled, ye careleſs women: for the vintage ſhall fail, the gathering ſhall not come.

Having requeſted diligent attention, Iſaiah proceeds to deliver the inſtructions he had in command from God to communicate.—*Many days*, &c. Theſe words may be conſidered as fixing the time when the threatened calamity was to commence, or rather as determining the period of its duration. The Hebrew words properly ſignify, After days above a year; and ſeem to point at an indefinite time, wherein the judgment deſcribed ſhould be executed; or according to our tranſlation, they may refer to its continuance, which, as we learn from ver. 14. was to be extended to a long period of time, year after year, as we ſay in our language, until the Spirit be poured out from on high, ver. 15. The prediction ſeems to relate to the calamities brought upon the Jewiſh nation in a leſſer degree by the Aſſyrians, and afterwards in a larger meaſure by the Chaldeans and Romans. At theſe ſeaſons, the careleſs, indolent, voluptuous inhabitants of Judea, were to be troubled by diſtreſſes of various kinds, and particularly by the failure of the vintage and the harveſt. The vintage was

was to fail, not through the inclemency of the weather, but on account of the devaſtation made by the invading enemies of the country; and for the ſame reaſon, the time of gathering in the precious fruits of the earth, as in former years, was not to arrive.—According to this prophecy, Senacherib king of Aſſyria, (of whom Hezekiah in his prayer to God, complains that he had laid waſte all the nations and their countries) having advanced into Judea with a large army; deſolated the land, deſtroyed or conſumed the vineyards, the fig-trees, and olive-trees, with the rich produce, and luxuriant crops, wherewith the land every where abounded; upon which the effeminate inhabitants of Canaan were accuſtomed to feaſt and regale themſelves. On theſe accounts they were to be greatly troubled; and like the rich men of whom the apoſtle James ſpeaks, they were to weep and howl for the miſeries that were come upon them.—The Moſt High over all the earth, who had beſtowed manifold kindneſſes on the Jewiſh people, greatly provoked by their baſe ingratitude, their inſolent abuſe of his mercies, and other atrocious crimes, deprived them of their corn in the time thereof, and their wine in the ſeaſon thereof.—This procedure, the juſtice of which cannot be queſtioned, ought to excite us, who have been guilty of ſimilar tranſgreſſions, to admire the long-ſuffering of God, which we have experienced in time paſt—to conſider our ways, and return unto the Lord—to ſtand in awe, and not to ſin after the ſimilitude of the Jews, who were viſited with ſuch terrible things in righteouſneſs, which they looked not for.

11 Tremble, ye women that are at eaſe; be troubled, ye careleſs ones: ſtrip you, and make you bare, and gird *ſackcloth* upon *your* loins.

The Prophet proceeds in ſtill ſtronger terms to admoniſh

admoniſh the effeminate inhabitants of the cities and towns of Judea, of greater calamities wherewith they were to be viſited for their many heinous ſins.—In the doleful proſpect of the terrible deſtruction of their church and nation, which he was now about to foretel, he calls upon them to tremble and to be troubled. The awful ſeverity of Jehovah to be hereafter manifeſted in the dreadful puniſhment of your enormous crimes, of which you receive this early intimation, ought to excite in your minds, not ſlight tranſient emotions, but that pungent ſorrow and extreme fear which is accompanied with great tremor and uneaſineſs. When you hear what I am about to deliver, juſtly may your lips quiver, rottenneſs enter into your bones, and you may tremble in yourſelves, that you may reſt in the day of trouble. Fear ought to come upon you, and trembling which may make all your bones to ſhake. Be afraid of God's righteous judgments, and be afflicted on account of thoſe tranſgreſſions, of which they are the juſt retribution.—*Strip you*, &c. Throughout the whole of this prediction, the allegorical ſtile is adopted; in which, under the cover of ſymbolic expreſſions, though the language is clearly explicable, the meaning ſeems to be obſcure. The cities of Judah are here addreſſed under the emblem of reſpectable, yet delicate matrons; decked with elegant robes and rich ornaments, which they are required to lay aſide. They are likewiſe directed to put on ſackcloth, or other coarſe garments, ſuited to the mournful occaſion; that their exterior appearance might correſpond with the employment to which they were invited. Similar advice was given to the Moabites, by the prophet Jeremiah, when he foretold their kingdom ſhould be broken like a veſſel: 'Upon 'the loins ſackcloth, and lamentation generally up-'on all the houſe tops *.' The words then are not to be literally explained, but underſtood according to the interpretation now given.—So great were the calamities

* Chap. xlviii. 37, 38.

calamities here predicted, that they called not only for trouble and anguiſh of mind, but for thoſe external ſigns of grief and diſtreſs, which are certain indications of their truth and reality. Outward expreſſions of ſorrow are demanded; the more effectually to awaken from ſecurity, the more deeply to impreſs the heart with approaching judgments, and the ſins whereby they are incurred. Words often leave only a faint impreſſion upon the heart, which is apt ſoon to wear off; but ſenſible objects that remain always preſent to the ſenſes, have a more powerful and permanent influence.

12 They ſhall lament for the teats, for the pleaſant fields, for the fruitful vine.

Some of the accumulated evils are here mentioned, which were to befal the Jewiſh nation, and to be the ſubjects of lamentation and wo, eſpecially at the period to which this prophecy refers. Our Prophet having called the inhabitants of Judea to the exerciſe of penitential ſorrow, with its proper expreſſions, changes the form of his diſcourſe, and introduces them mourning for the terrible devaſtations which he immediately foretels. The firſt ground of grief and vexation is thus ſtated—*They ſhall lament for the teats;* becauſe of the deplorable condition to which mothers giving ſuck, with the infants at their breaſts, were to be reduced. The words of Jeſus Chriſt, when ſpeaking of the calamities which were coming on the city Jeruſalem, perfectly accord with this ſentiment, and may in ſome meaſure explain the prediction under conſideration. 'Wo unto them,' (ſaith the compaſſionate Saviour), 'that are with child, and 'to them that give ſuck in thoſe days *;' whoſe particular ſituation, and tender affection for their young ones, render them incapable of fleeing from their enemies into diſtant places for ſafety, like people in more favourable circumſtances. Again, when bear-

* Mark xiii. 17.

ing his croſs to the place of crucifixion, he thus addreſſed the women who bewailed and lamented him, commiſerating the ſufferings, the ſorrow, and the ſhame which he ſuſtained, 'Daughters of Jeruſalem, 'weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves, and for 'your children; for behold the days are coming *,' &c.—In times of peace and proſperity, children are often a great comfort and bleſſing, (this was eſpecially a prevailing ſentiment among the Jewiſh nation) but in ſeaſons of great diſtreſs, when war, famine, and peſtilence, ſpread deſolation throughout the land, thoſe who have ſucking infants are more grievouſly afflicted than other perſons; they cannot ſo eaſily eſcape the ravages made by theſe deſolating judgments; their miſeries and ſorrows are multiplied, by thoſe of their tender offspring. On theſe accounts there ſhould be lamentation and wo. Perhaps the expreſſion may have ſome reſpect to the very great ſtraits to which the citizens of Jeruſalem were reduced, 'When the tongue of the ſucking child cleaved 'to the roof of his mouth for thirſt; when the hands 'of pitiful women had ſodden their own children, 'they were their meat in the deſtruction of the daugh-'ter of my people †.' Then indeed lamentation would be made over the breaſts of the afflicted mothers, and

For the pleaſant fields, &c. The land of Judea every where abounded with rich beautiful fields, covered with luxuriant crops of the fineſt wheat and other grains. The paſtures were clothed with flocks, and the valleys were clad with corns. The ſoil was excellent and fertile; the air was temperate and ſalubrious; the former and the latter rain was given from heaven in their ſeaſon; the land was made fat with ſhowers; God bleſſed the ſpringing thereof, and crowned the year with his goodneſs ‡. How pleaſant muſt have been the ſight of the herbs, the flowery, the verdant meads, and fruitful fields, which every where met the eye of the beholder, and delighted

* Luke xxiii. 28, 29. † Lam. iv. 4, 10. ‡ See Pſal. lxv. 9. *et ſeq.*

ed the inhabitants!—Throughout the country there was alſo great plenty of the beſt vines, producing the fineſt grapes, that yielded the choiceſt wines. They were planted in large quantities; they grew to great perfection; they put forth numerous branches and leaves, and were richly loaded with cluſters of the moſt juicy and delicious grapes. Of theſe pleaſant fields and precious fruits, the people of Judah were to be deprived, by the righteous judgments of God, as the juſt puniſhment of their many aggravated iniquities. No wonder that this humiliating change of circumſtances, by which the ſtate of the inhabitants was to be entirely reverſed, ſhould give occaſion to grief and lamentation, as is intimated in this prediction.—The Lord turns a fruitful land into barrenneſs, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein. Of this important truth, a very remarkable proof lies now before us, which is illuſtrated in the following verſes.—If then we really wiſh to avert this deplorable calamity inflicted upon the land of Judea, let us beware of perſiſting in our tranſgreſſions, and thereby provoking the Lord to deprive us of the comforts we enjoy.

13 Upon the land of my people ſhall come up thorns *and* briers; yea, upon all the houſes of joy *in* the joyous city.

Theſe words contain an affecting deſcription of the deſolation of the land of Judea. The people having been either killed or led away captives by the enemy; thorns and briers, the natural production of the earth when left uncultivated, were ſoon to ſpring up and overrun the grounds, which for a long time, had been exceedingly beautiful and fertile. A clear proof of the miſerable, depopulated condition of this once rich, and pleaſant country, is immediately ſubjoined. —*Yea, upon all the houſes of joy*, &c. Jeruſalem was undoubtedly the joyous city here intended. In the 48th pſalm, it is celebrated as the joy of the whole earth;

earth; to which the poſterity of Iſrael reſorted with gladneſs three times in the year, to attend thoſe ſolemn feſtivals, wherein they rejoiced before the Lord their God. Beſides, the inhabitants enjoyed the greateſt affluence and proſperity, with all the good things of a preſent life; from all which the juſtice of this deſignation, *the joyous city*, is abundantly evident.—The houſes of joy which are ſpoken of, were probably places of public reſort, where the citizens and people from all parts of the country met to congratulate each other, on the continuance of the felicity wherewith they were bleſſed, and the happineſs they felt on again ſeeing one another in the metropolis. Thoſe ſumptuous edifices might alſo be intended, which were built by men of vaſt opulence in the city and its environs, wherein they diſplayed their wealth, ſplendor, and magnificence, and which were on many occaſions, houſes of great feſtivity and joy. Even upon theſe elegant manſions of mirth and gaiety, where luxury and diſſipation had long reſided, thorns and briers were to ſpring up, and to grow thick and ſtrong, in conſequence of their being deſerted by their poſſeſſors, neglected and deſolated.—Such was the very deplorable ſtate to which the intemperate, the polluted, the oppreſſive city Jeruſalem was to be reduced; becauſe ſhe obeyed not the voice of the Lord; ſhe received not correction; ſhe truſted not in the Lord; ſhe drew not near to her God. Her prophets were light and treacherous perſons; her prieſts polluted the ſanctuary, and did violence to the law *.

14 Becauſe the palaces ſhall be forſaken; the multitude of the city ſhall be left; the forts and towers ſhall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild aſſes, a paſture of flocks.

In this verſe the lamentable repreſentation of the future miſerable ſtate of Jeruſalem is continued.—With reſpect to the palaces, the ſtately edifice which was

* Zeph. iii. 1. *et ſeq.*

was the royal reſidence of the kings of Judah, and the far more magnificent temple of Jehovah, which was built, as king David affirmed, not for man, but for the Lord God *, were to be reduced to ruins. Concerning the palace laſt mentioned, God ſaith by the prophet Jeremiah, 'I have forſaken mine houſe †;' and Jeſus Chriſt thus ſpake to the Jews, 'Your houſe 'is left unto you deſolate ‡.' Having been deſerted by Jehovah, it was forſaken alſo by the thouſands of prieſts who had daily officiated within its precincts, and by the myriads of people who ſtatedly repaired thither from every diſtrict of the kingdom, to worſhip the Lord God of their fathers. The palace occupied by the kings of Judah was likewiſe deſerted by the princes who had dwelt in it, and allowed to fall into ruins.—*The multitude of the city ſhall be left; i. e.* the city filled, or frequented by a multitude of people. Expreſſions of this ſort ſometimes occur in ſcripture: thus the apoſtle of the Gentiles ſpeaks of the law of righteouſneſs, by which is meant the righteouſneſs of the law. Jeruſalem was to be forſaken by the prodigious multitudes that formerly thronged the city, occupied the houſes, and buſtled along the ſtreets; who were now either ſlain or taken priſoners. The few that remained, after the cruel ravages of a victorious army, ſhould be left ſolitary and deſolate.—*The forts and towers ſhall be for dens for ever*, &c. Forts and watch towers were erected at proper diſtances around the city Jeruſalem, both for ornament and defence. Hence the royal poet himſelf, delighted with the pleaſing ſpectacle, invites the citizens of Zion to contemplate their beauty and utility, and to tranſmit to poſterity the happineſs and ſecurity which were enjoyed within theſe bulwarks. His words run thus, in the ſacred ode to which I refer: 'Mark ye well her bulwarks, conſider her pa-'laces, that ye may tell to the generation following. 'For this God is our God, for ever and ever; he will 'be our guide even unto death ||.'

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* 1 Chron. xxix. 1. † Chap. xii. 7. ‡ Mat. xxiii. 38.
|| Pſal. xlviii. 13, 14.

The temple, the palace, the city, having been deſerted by their reſpective poſſeſſors, and thoſe who frequented them, the forts and towers were to ſhare the ſame fate. They were to become places of reſidence to wild aſſes, in common with all ſorts of untamed animals which ſhun connection with man, and decline to yield him any ſpecial ſervice. *A paſture of flocks*; where they might feed and range at large, undiſturbed by any human being.—*For ever*: Not to eternity, but for a limited time, which is thus ſpecified in the next verſe that follows, 'Until the Spirit be pour-'ed upon us from on high.' The term fixed, wherein the deſolation above deſcribed ſhould continue, is reſtricted to a certain period to be terminated by this event. In this confined ſenſe the word *for ever* is ſometimes uſed in ſcripture, as in 1 Chron. xxiii. 25. where 'David ſaid, the Lord God of Iſrael hath given 'reſt unto his people, that they may dwell in Jeru-'ſalem for ever.' The poſterity of Iſrael, far from dwelling in Jeruſalem throughout all ages, have for many centuries been diſperſed over the face of the earth. The Prophet meant that they were to have their reſidence in the holy city for many generations. And this is plainly the import of the word in the prediction we have been conſidering.—The awful judgments which God inflicted upon his ancient people, and their highly favoured city and land, ought effectually to reſtrain us from thoſe ſins which proved the means of their ruin. If he ſpared them not whom he appropriated to himſelf, how can we expect that he will allow our iniquities to paſs unpuniſhed. Let us take warning from their ſufferings, and be inſtructed ſolicitouſly to avoid thoſe tranſgreſſions which have rendered them an aſtoniſhment, a reproach, and a perpetual deſolation.—Thoſe who read with attention the prophecy we have now explained, cannot doubt that it relates to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the devaſtation of the land of Judea, and the overthrow of the Jewiſh nation. It ſeems directly to point at the deſolation brought on that city and kingdom

dom by the Aſſyrians, the Chaldeans, and afterward by the Romans. The direful calamities which the Jews ſuffered from theſe nations, and the long continuance of the threatened judgments, ſeem exactly to agree with what is here foretold, and to juſtify the application of the above predictions to theſe events. I conclude this article with the remarkable words of the prophet Zechariah: 'They refuſed to hearken—'Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant ſtone, 'leſt they ſhould hear the law, and the words which 'the Lord of hoſts hath ſent in his Spirit by the for-'mer prophets; therefore came a great wrath from 'the Lord of hoſts—Thus the land was deſolate af-'ter them, that no man paſſed through nor returned; 'for they laid the pleaſant land deſolate *.'

15 ¶ Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderneſs be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a foreſt.

The calamities above recited were to be terminated after a long period, by the precious ſpiritual benefits which God was to confer upon his people. The firſt mentioned, which ought to be viewed as the cauſe from which the others proceed, is the effuſion of the Spirit. The advent of the Son of God in human nature, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf, and to obtain the redemption of the church, was the object of ardent expectation under the Old Teſtament. The gift of the Holy Ghoſt promiſed to renovate men after the image of God, to reſtore them to ſpiritual life, and to prepare them for the full enjoyment of the eternal ſalvation of Jeſus Chriſt, is the great benefit expected under the New Teſtament. In conſequence of this rich donation, which accompanies the miniſtry of the word, the goſpel is propagated with ſucceſs over all the earth; the gifts and graces of the Spirit are in large meaſure diſpenſed;

* Zech. vii. 11, *et ſeq.*

ſed; and multitudes are qualified for the ſervice and enjoyment of God. 'And it ſhall come to paſs afterward,' ſaith the Lord by the prophet Joel, 'That I will 'pour out my Spirit upon all fleſh; and your ſons and 'your daughters ſhall prophecy; your old men ſhall 'dream dreams; your young men ſhall ſee viſions,' &c. * The gifts beſtowed in conſequence of this and other ſimilar promiſes, may be diſtributed into three claſſes; for from the ſame Spirit proceed diverſities of gifts. There are thoſe which are extraordinary and miraculous; ſuch as the gift of prophecy, of tongues, of diſcerning of ſpirits, which were conferred on the day of pentecoſt, and were admirably adapted to the time, the circumſtances, and the benevolent deſigns to be thereby accompliſhed. There are thoſe which may be called common or ordinary, being more generally and extenſively communicated; ſuch as the gift of knowledge, of profeſſional abilities, of prayer; which are well calculated to render men uſeful in their ſeveral capacities and ſtations. There are alſo ſpecial and ſanctifying gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are peculiar to the choſen, the called, and faithful in Chriſt Jeſus; ſuch as the precious faith of God's elect, true repentance, divine counſel, ſupport, and conſolation; whereby the people of God are furniſhed for every good work, and prepared afore unto glory. Theſe various gifts are conveyed by the Spirit (though thoſe of the firſt ſort were confined to the time wherein Chriſtianity was promulgated) when

Poured upon us from on high. It is not ſaid, until theſe gifts and graces be gently dropped, or ſparingly imparted, as they were under the former diſpenſation; but until they are poured in vaſt plenty, even as floods of water on the dry ground. The expreſſion frequently recurs, and deſerves attention. It plainly imports the unbounded liberality of the Father of lights, who ſheds down, not in a ſcanty meaſure, but with rich profuſion, this ineſtimable bleſſing.

* Chap. ii. 28.

bleſſing. It alſo intimates, that this precious benefit ſhould be extenſively conferred, not on a particular people only, as before the aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, but 'upon all fleſh,' as ſaid the apoſtle Peter, 'upon every nation under heaven;' ſo that its benign influence ſhould be univerſally felt. Beſides, it ſerves to remind us of the ſalutary effects produced by this liberal donation, that, as water refreſhes, mollifies, and fructifies the earth; ſo the Spirit, when poured from on high, ſoftens, comforts, and fills thoſe who receive it with the fruits of holineſs and righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the glory and praiſe of God. The gift of the Spirit, like the little cloud, which ſeemed at firſt to the prophet's ſervant only in ſize as a man's hand, ſpread until it covered the whole heavens, and was followed with a great rain. Like the waters of the ſanctuary, beheld by Ezekiel in viſion, this living water, which at firſt reached only to the ankles, became a broad and deep river. How glorious the effects that accompanied the firſt abundant pouring forth of the Spirit! What miracles, what illumination, what converſion to God, what faith, what holineſs, what conſolation, what unanimity! Hundreds, thouſands, were added to the church by the word preached with the Holy Ghoſt and power from on high. And ever ſince that memorable period, by the conveyance of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, numerous converts have been made to the faith and obedience of the goſpel, who, through ſanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, have ſhewn that they were deſtined to ſalvation.—Let each of us, then, ſeriouſly conſider, if the ſpiritual judgments we have deſerved, have been ſtopt in their progreſs, by the Spirit being poured upon us. He is the Spirit of wiſdom and revelation; are we filled with the knowledge of God's will? He is the Spirit of penitence and true contrition of heart; hath he beſtowed upon us repentance unto life? He is the Spirit of ſanctification; hath he operated in us true holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord?

He is the Spirit of conſolation; hath he granted unto us joy and peace in believing? Thus ought we impartially to examine ourſelves, thoroughly convinced that our ſtate is deplorable until the Spirit be given unto us; that neither the judgments of heaven, the forbearance of God, the word, nor the ordinances of divine inſtitution, will prove effectual for real converſion, unleſs they are attended by his divine agency.—When this event takes place

The wilderneſs ſhall be a fruitful field. What an aſtoniſhing change doth then ſucceed! As the bleſſing ſpecified in the firſt part of the verſe is ſpiritual, ſo the effects reſulting from it are of the ſame nature with the cauſe whereby they are produced; though doubtleſs they may be accompanied with a deſirable alteration of external circumſtances. Our Prophet ſeems clearly to have had in view a ſpiritual change, or converſion, to be accompliſhed on thoſe of whom he gives a figurative repreſentation. The wilderneſs may denote the Gentile nations; which, prior to the time in which the Spirit was poured upon them, reſembled a wild uncultivated deſart; the forlorn ſtate of unconverted ſinners, who are deſtitute of pleaſant good fruits. It may likewiſe indicate the barren, deſolate condition of the Jewiſh people, until their ſituation was in ſome meaſure happily changed by the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles.—Of the wilderneſs in the ſenſe now given, it is foretold, that it ſhall be a fruitful field. For this purpoſe, heathen countries, unrenewed men, were to have their ignorance, prejudices, and ſuperſtitions removed; the precious ſeed of the word of God was to be ſown among them, and watered by the dew of heaven: in conſequence whereof, it was every where to ſpring up, and to bring forth abundance of the excellent fruits of the Spirit, that ſhould render them deſirable and uſeful.—*And the fruitful field*, &c. By this figurative expreſſion the Jewiſh church were intended, which, having been cultivated for a long time by the ſervants of Jehovah, under his particular direction and

and ſpecial care, and enriched by many ſignal bleſſings above all other nations, yielded thoſe fruits which were honourable to God and profitable to themſelves—*ſhall be counted for a foreſt.* The church which ſubſiſted under the Moſaic œconomy was to loſe its former beautiful appearance, being deprived of the important advantages which the people had long enjoyed; trees of righteouſneſs, which were rarely to be met with, were to fall into decay; and but few comparatively, the planting of the Lord, were to ſupply their room. In this manner the Jewiſh church was to fall into a wild, ſcattered, barren ſtate, reſembling that of a foreſt or large wood. Attend to the words of Jeſus Chriſt on this ſubject: 'I 'ſay unto you, that many ſhall come from the eaſt 'and weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, 'and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the 'children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt into outer 'darkneſs; there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of 'teeth *.' Multitudes from all quarters ſhall aſſociate with the ancient patriarchs, in the kingdom founded and adminiſtered by the Meſſiah, whilſt numbers born within the precincts of the church, poſſeſſing peculiar external privileges, ſhall be excluded from that kingdom, and be ejected into a miſerable ſtate. —The great alterations marked in this verſe, were owing to the Spirit being poured on one people, and not on another. In tender mercy, Jehovah was graciouſly pleaſed to make the Gentiles fellow partakers of the benefit, which he had conferred upon the poſterity of Iſrael, who, having reſiſted the Holy Spirit, he was withdrawn from them, ſo that they became as a foreſt; he was given to other nations, who became as a fruitful field.—Under full conviction of the ineſtimable worth of this bleſſing, and of the infinite readineſs of our heavenly Father to give the Spirit to them that aſk him, let us fervently implore that he may be given to us, to direct, to ſtrengthen, and comfort

* Mat. viii. 11, 12.

comfort our hearts; and to work in us that which is well pleaſing in God's ſight.

16 Then judgment ſhall dwell in the wilderneſs, and righteouſneſs remain in the fruitful field.

Theſe words illuſtrate and confirm the truth delivered in the preceding verſe. They contain an explicit declaration, that when the Gentiles ſhould be admitted into the Meſſiah's kingdom, they were to be adorned with that judgment and righteouſneſs which is highly ſuitable to their new character and privileges. In conſequence of the ſalutary doctrine of the goſpel being promulgated, and the Spirit poured on individuals and ſocieties, they ſhall clearly diſcern the nature and comparative value of the objects that claim their attention and purſuit; they ſhall deliberately inveſtigate them, ſo as to diſtinguiſh good from evil, truth from falſehood; and to approve the things that are truly excellent. They ſhall conduct themſelves with prudence, order their affairs with diſcretion, and follow the things whereby one may edify another. Amidſt the vaſt variety of circumſtances which require guarded attention, they ſhall generally act with propriety; diſcovering proper reſpect to time, to place, to connection, to buſineſs, to ſociety. Eſtimating the ſeveral claims of the Creator and the creature, and the duties which they owe to both, they ſhall walk humbly with God, and converſe inoffenſively with men, attending to time and judgment, and endeavouring to do all things in the fear of God. They ſhall appropriate to buſineſs, to devotion, their proper ſeaſons; ſtudying to ſpeak and to be ſilent, to commend and to reprove, to give and to withhold, according to the rules of ſound judgment and the law of truth; that they may diſplay the majeſty of religion; and that the world may know that he is ſupremely wiſe, by whoſe counſel they are guided.—This judgment *ſhall dwell in the wilderneſs*. In thoſe nations which formerly reſembled a deſart on account

count of their having been neglected, uncultivated, and barren, after the Spirit is poured on them from on high, glory ſhall dwell, and judgment ſhall have among them a fixed habitation. The phraſe here uſed ſeems to have been taken from the practice of judges and magiſtrates, of philoſophers and teachers, who adminiſter juſtice, and inculcate leſſons of inſtruction, in houſes erected throughout the land for the purpoſe, which are reckoned the ornaments of a country. In like manner, according to this prediction, divine ſtatutes relative to faith, and worſhip, and good conduct, leſſons of truth and wiſdom, ſhould be publicly taught in certain places dedicated to theſe purpoſes, which were to have a permanent eſtabliſhment in thoſe kingdoms which formerly reſembled the deſart.

And righteouſneſs remain in the fruitful field. In ſcripture ſtile, righteouſneſs is the peculiar attainment of renewed men, who, through cordial ſubmiſſion to the righteouſneſs which is by faith in Jeſus Chriſt, are admitted into favour with God, and comprehends the practice of all the duties and virtues of the ſpiritual life, which are required in the law of the Lord, adorn holy profeſſion, and glorify God. In the abſolute neceſſity of this diſtinguiſhing badge of true Chriſtians, Jeſus Chriſt inſtructed his hearers in ſtrong terms, 'I ſay unto you, that except your righteouſ-'neſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes 'and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the king-'dom of heaven *.' The high importance and benign influence of this righteouſneſs, is beautifully exemplified in what is recorded concerning Zachariah and Elizabeth, who were both righteous, not only before men, who judge by the outward appearance, but before God, who ſeeth the heart; whoſe judgment is according to truth. This happy ſtate they attained, not by the deeds of the law, whereby no man can be juſtified in the ſight of God, but by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which is unto all, and upon all

* Matth. v. 20.

all them that believe. As a proof that the grace of God was beſtowed upon them, they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs; their religious and moral conduct were altogether inoffenſive; they indulged not in any ſin; they neglected not to perform any duty. Perſons of this amiable deſcription, who were themſelves righteous, and wrought righteouſneſs, according to this prophecy, were to remain in the fruitful field. Placing their faith and hope on the everlaſting righteouſneſs of Meſſiah the Prince, and experiencing the ſanctifying influence of the Spirit, they would ſtudy, from the beſt principles, to give unto God the things that are God's; to man, the things that are man's. In their tranſactions with their brethren, they would be regulated by the perfect rule of equity delivered by Jeſus Chriſt, 'All things what-'ſoever you would that men ſhould do to you, do ye 'even ſo to them, for this is the law and the pro-'phets.' In the wilderneſs converted into a fruitful field, righteouſneſs ſhall abide throughout all ages. A remarkable inſtance of this truth is mentioned by one of the fathers of the church, who ſays, that when he was at Milan, 'A very poor man, who was deſtitute 'even of the neceſſaries of life, found a purſe con-'taining 200 crowns. From ſtrict regard to equity, 'he advertiſed what he had found; which he was 'ready to reſtore to its proper owner, on proving his 'property. The perſon who had loſt the money came 'and verified his claim; on which the purſe was 'inſtantly reſtored to the proprietor, who offered the 'finder 20 crowns of reward, and urged him to take '10, or at leaſt 5, which was peremptorily refuſed. 'The owner of the money then threw down the 'purſe, with theſe words: Since you will take no-'thing, I have loſt nothing.' What a pleaſing contention betwixt two righteous perſons! the earth was the theatre, God the ſpectator! whilſt you, my brethren, ought to admire, and imitate that righteouſneſs, of which I have given you this inſtance.

By

By the glorious events foretold in this and the preceding verſe, the predicted deſolation of Judea was to be terminated. To perceive the fulfilment of the prophecy, it may not be improper to obſerve, that the ancient prophets connect the pouring out of the Spirit, with the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, and the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of the Meſſiah. To the former of theſe remarkable periods, the following prediction, delivered by God's ſervant Ezekiel, ſeems primarily to have referred: 'I will take you from among the heathen, and ga-'ther you out of all countries, and will bring you in-'to your own land.—And I will put my Spirit with-'in you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes*,' &c. Then, this important bleſſing was accompanied with repentance of their former abominable idolatry; with return to God, and general reformation, inſomuch that the poſterity of Iſrael aſſumed a new appearance, like that of a fruitful field. Theſe things, however, were only a prelude to the more full accompliſhment of what we have been conſidering; at the time wherein the ſpiritual kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt was erected, when the Spirit of true converſion was abundantly poured forth, not only on the houſe of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, but upon the Gentile nations. Then every article in the prophecy before us was fully verified, and God illuſtriouſly diſplayed the faithfulneſs of his word of promiſe.

17 And the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.

Another happy conſequence is here ſpecified, reſulting from the enjoyment of the benefits above mentioned. There is a beautiful order, an intimate connection and dependance, that ſubſiſts between the bleſſings of divine grace; the poſſeſſion of one leads to the fruition of another—*The work of righteouſneſs ſhall*

* See chap. xxxvi. 24. *et ſeq.*

ſhall be peace. The righteouſneſs whereof honourable mention is made by our Prophet, may be conſidered as compriſing whatever bears that deſignation in ſcripture, and is there attributed to the ſervants of God. The righteouſneſs which they have in Jeſus Chriſt, who is emphatically denominated 'the Lord 'our righteouſneſs;' by faith in whom, they are eſtimated righteous before God, conſiſts in his perfect conformity to the law of God, which is its meaſure and ſtandard. The Son of God in human nature was graciouſly pleaſed to yield compleat obedience to the precepts it contains, and profound ſubmiſſion to death, which was threatened againſt man's tranſgreſſion; and thus he became the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth. This is not the righteouſneſs of the law which Moſes thus deſcribeth, 'The man who doth theſe things ſhall live by them,' but 'the righteouſneſs of God without the law; wit-'neſſed by the law and the prophets, which is by faith 'of Jeſus Chriſt unto all, and upon all them that be-'lieve *.'—The work of this righteouſneſs ſhall be peace. It reſtores amity and friendſhip betwixt God and man, who were formerly at variance; the law of God is thereby magnified; ſufficient atonement is made for ſin; the ſpiritual enemies of the church are vanquiſhed; eternal redemption is obtained; the glad tidings of reconciliation are publiſhed; and the Holy Spirit is given, to ſubdue every thing that oppoſeth itſelf to the obedience of God. In this manner the everlaſting righteouſneſs of Meſſiah operates peace, and opens the way for the reſtoration of the moſt deſirable tranquillity.

Beſides, the people of God who are renewed after his image in righteouſneſs, have all their powers and faculties renovated, reduced to proper order, and a beautiful regular ſubordination eſtabliſhed among them; ſo that they perform their ſeveral functions with alacrity and pleaſure. Concord and harmony ſucceed to thoſe internal commotions, which formerly

* Rom. iii. 21, 22.

ly agitated and disturbed the various passions of the soul. Being made partakers of the divine nature, and furnished with new principles of action, they are delightfully employed in fulfilling all righteousness, in keeping judgment, and doing justice at all times. They uniformly endeavour to maintain unbiassed rectitude of conduct; to promote the welfare of society; to seek the peace of those among whom they dwell; to be upright and equitable in their transactions; and faithful in discharging the duties of their several capacities and stations.—In the practice of this righteousness, the most desirable peace of mind is enjoyed. 'Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her 'paths are peace *.' 'As many as walk according 'to this rule, peace and mercy shall be upon them †.' 'Great peace have they who love God's law, and no-'thing shall offend them‡.' So excellent, so useful, is this sacred peace which is the work of righteousness, that the Apostle of the Gentiles affirms, that it passeth all understanding; that it keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus; it preserves them from being surprised by internal insurrection, or annoyed by any external foe. It dispels perplexing fears, it keeps off vexing griefs, corroding cares, foolish suspicions and distrust. Amidst the dissentions and afflictions, the disorders and tumults which every where abound, righteousness with its concomitant, imparts the most pleasant tranquillity and satisfaction to the soul.

And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. One happy consequence resulting from righteousness; and the various exercises of which it is composed is quietness. The Hebrew word denotes the rest of the dead in the dark and silent grave, where they are free from every disquietude, and all sense of trouble; and it is here transferred, to signify the undisturbed repose which flows from a rectified temper and conduct. Righteousness not only communicates that sweet serenity to the mind, which places its possessor in a condition best adapted to secure

* Prov. iii: 17. † Gal. vi. 16. ‡ Psal. cxix. 165.

the agreeable enjoyment of himſelf, and the mercies he receives; but it tends to reſtore and preſerve peace and harmony in ſociety. It not only ſuppreſſes every uneaſy paſſion that would vex and moleſt us, but it tends to prevent and allay thoſe ſtorms that cannot otherwiſe be averted. It extends, enlarges, and perpetuates external tranquillity, until it embrace, not only the upright among men, but their enemies; even the beaſts and the ſtones of the field ſhall not hurt; and then, like a great river, flows ſmoothly on to the end of its courſe, where its waters are abſorbed in the immenſe ocean of love and joy.

And aſſurance for ever. This is another bleſſed effect of righteouſneſs in the extenſive ſenſe that hath been aſſigned to it. This ineſtimable benefit communicates full perſuaſion of the accompliſhment of the faithful promiſes of God, and firm confidence in the divine favour. What can poſſibly give ſtronger proof of the benignity, the love, and wiſdom of God, than the obedience and death of his own Son, in order to bring in for us everlaſting righteouſneſs? and what can afford more ſatisfying evidence of having received this precious gift, than the practice of righteouſneſs, which is accompanied with aſſurance to right hearted men in every age of the church?—Wherefore, brethren, let my counſel be acceptable to you: 'Seek ye the Lord; ſeek righ-'teouſneſs: if thou ſeekeſt her as ſilver, and ſearcheſt 'for her as for hid treaſures, then ſhalt thou under-'ſtand righteouſneſs, and judgment and equity, and 'every good path.' Be earneſt and frequent in prayer, until you obtain this grace, with its excellent fruits; then ſhall you find deliverance from evil; acceptance with God; victory over enemies; peace of conſcience; joy in the Holy Ghoſt; aſſurance of God's love; and in due time, the fruition of thoſe pleaſures which are at his right hand for evermore. If you ſuffer for righteouſneſs' ſake, it ſhall conduce to your happineſs; though men may on that account condemn you, God will approve; though friends may

deſert

deſert you, Jeſus Chriſt will confeſs you. In diſtreſs, you ſhall be revived with the proſpect of felicity; in ſorrow, you ſhall have ample ground of joy; in diſquietude, internal tranquillity; in temptation, a way of eſcape ſhall be opened; in death, you ſhall find life and immortality.

18 And my people ſhall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in ſure dwellings, and in quiet reſting places.

Temporal ſecurity and freedom from the moleſtation of enemies is likewiſe promiſed to the church, as another joyful fruit of the righteouſneſs wherewith they ſhould be bleſſed.—The perſons who were to enjoy this important benefit are deſigned the people of God—thoſe whom he hath choſen, redeemed and appropriated to himſelf, who are devoted to his ſervice, and employed in ſhewing forth his praiſes. After the converſion of the Gentile nations to the faith and obedience of the goſpel, the peculiar people of the Moſt High were no longer to have their reſidence confined to the fertile country of Judea, but were to be diſperſed over the whole earth. In this view, to aſſure them of agreeable ſafety and tranquillity, various expreſſions of ſimilar import are here uſed. They ſhall dwell in a peaceable habitation, with all that appertains to them; their children, their ſervants, their flocks and fields, ſhall be free from trouble and diſturbance. Plenty of what is neceſſary to their comfortable ſubſiſtence ſhall be allotted to them; harmony ſhall reign in their families; and of this proſperity they ſhall have the peaceable poſſeſſion; free from foreign invaſion, or domeſtic tumults. Like Naphtali, ſatisfied with favour, and full with the bleſſing of the Lord, they ſhall poſſeſs their places of abode; ſo that men ſhall ſay, 'The Lord bleſs thee, 'O habitation of righteouſneſs *.'—*And in ſure dwellings.* This expreſſion ſeems to intimate the continuance

* Jer. xxxi. 23.

nuance of their happineſs. Perpetuity gives a reliſh and ſweetneſs to every comfort; without it, riches are no better than gilded thorns, which hurt thoſe who graſp them; honours are only empty bubbles, which expoſe thoſe who once poſſeſſed them to greater miſeries; even former health aggravates the affliction which takes it away. Sure dwellings, fixed places of reſidence, are therefore ſecured and ſettled upon the church. It is added—*And in quiet reſting places*, where they ſhall have not only food and raiment, but protection and defence from evil; reſt and repoſe with all thoſe ſubſtantial bleſſings, that may render their ſituation agreeable and pleaſant. Probably our Prophet had in view thoſe places which are conſecrated to the ſervice of God, wherein his people aſſembled for the ſolemn exerciſes of divine worſhip. In troublous times, theſe ſacred edifices are thrown down, or converted to other purpoſes, by the enemies of religion; or thoſe who convene in them are in various ways diſturbed and annoyed. At the happy period, in which this prediction received its fulfilment, the ſervants of God met together for mutual edification and comfort, to pay their united homage to their Lord and Saviour, none making them afraid. There they found quiet and refreſhment, in the contemplation of the divine all-ſufficiency, and the perfect mediation of Jeſus Chriſt; there they were ſolaced with acceſs unto God; with the inſtructions and promiſes of his faithful word; and the delightful ſociety of joint heirs of ſalvation.—Do you then make the Lord your refuge, even the Moſt High your habitation. Have recourſe to him as your dwelling place and quiet reſt, not only in ſeaſons of trouble and danger, but upon all occaſions, and at all times. Say unto God the Lord with David, 'Be thou my 'ſtrong habitation, to which I may continually re-'ſort *;' and you may hope to experience the benefits reſulting from the protection of his providence, and the comforts to be found in the place where his honour dwelleth.

19 When

* Pſal. lxxi. 3.

19 When it ſhall hail, coming down on the foreſt; and the city ſhall be low in a low place.

The time wherein the people of God were to be bleſſed with ſafety and comfort, is pointed out as the ſeaſon in which divine judgments ſhould be executed on their enemies.—The foreſt here mentioned muſt be viewed as repreſenting thoſe nations which are adverſe to the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, of which the Aſſyrian empire anciently was an eminent type, as we have repeatedly obſerved in the courſe of theſe lectures. Though hailſtones have ſometimes been the means of inflicting awful vengeance on the enemies of the church, as in the land of Egypt, and in the days of Joſhua, I ſuppoſe they are not to be literally, but ſymbollically, underſtood in the words before us. The hail may denote the terrible calamities which Almighty God was to ſend upon the adverſaries of his people. Theſe judgments were to come down on the foreſt of adverſe kingdoms, with dreadful fury and irreſiſtible force, ſo as to ſpread havock and deſolation among thoſe who were ſignified by the lofty barren trees of the wood. In this alarming diſaſtrous period, the people of God were to reſide in their habitations, in peace and tranquillity. Indeed this hath often happened. The patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, dwelt in quiet habitations in Egypt, in Gerar, and in Padan-aram: In Goſhen their poſterity had ſure dwellings; in the wilderneſs they had reſting places, whilſt calamities of various kinds diſtreſſed their enemies. If God hath been ſo gracious to his ſaints in paſt ages; if he here declares, that in future times the ſame diverſity of diſpenſations ſhall be ſeen; we may juſtly expect that he will continue to ſhew kindneſs to them who love and ſerve him, when he inflicts deſolating judgments upon their foes.

And the city ſhall be low in a low place; or, as the Hebrew words are tranſlated on the margin of ſome bibles, *The city ſhall be utterly abaſed.* Babylon

lon, the great and powerful metropolis of the Aſſyrian empire, ſeems to be the city intended, which, according to this prophecy, was to be reduced to a very abject ſtate. That magnificent city, the ſeat of extenſive imperial power, was accordingly greatly depreſſed, firſt by means of Cyrus king of Perſia, and afterward at different times, until it was deſolated, neglected, and altogether diſappeared; ſo that hardly a veſtige of that renowned capital of Aſſyria now remains. Such is the inſtability of all human grandeur, and ſuch ſhall be the certain overthrow of all thoſe who are inimical to the people of God; whilſt they enjoy agreeable ſecurity and repoſe, with the ordinances of divine inſtitution. And as Babylon, in the prophetic ſtile, is analogous to the great city Rome, which hath long been hoſtile to the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt; ſo this part of the prophecy ſeems ſtrongly to intimate, that Rome ſhall likewiſe be reduced to the moſt humiliating ſtate.

20 Bleſſed *are* ye that ſow beſide all waters, that ſend forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the aſs.

The laſt mentioned effect of the liberal communication of the Spirit from on high, is diligent attention to the advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Iſaiah having declared that the wilderneſs of the Gentile nations was to become a fruitful field, foreſaw, by the Spirit of prophecy, the happy period wherein the apoſtles and miniſters of the Lord were to go forth from the land of Judea, to ſow the precious ſeed of the word of God in all the regions of the earth, eſpecially in thoſe places that were moſt populous and moſt frequented. He foreſaw them iſſuing forth to prepare men of every country for the reception of the goſpel, by removing the prejudices, errors, and ſuperſtitions which oppoſe the extenſion of the Meſſiah's kingdom—to labour with aſſiduity and zeal, until they occupied the inheritance of the world,

world; until the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhould come in; the boundaries of the church be enlarged, and the earth filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs. With this delightful proſpect fully in his view, he concludes this prediction, by extolling their felicity who were to be thus employed, and by encouraging them to proſecute with ardour the bleſſed work wherein they were engaged. This being the obvious deſign of the words under conſideration, their literal meaning muſt not be overlooked; but their figurative and ſpiritual ſenſe demands our chief attention. Whilſt they plainly indicate the affluence and happineſs of righteous men at the time referred to, in the abundant increaſe of their corns and flocks, ariſing from their induſtry and good management of agricultural affairs, in places peculiarly well adapted to huſbandry,—they point at the ſuperior felicity of thoſe who are ſucceſsfully employed in cultivating mens hearts, and in conveying to them the precious truths of the everlaſting goſpel, theſe incorruptible ſeeds which live and abide for ever.

The perſons pronounced bleſſed are they that ſow beſide all waters—who with judgment and diligence diſperſe among the people the word of God, in a manner ſuited to their various neceſſities and circumſtances, in the pleaſing hope that it ſhall ſpring up and bring forth fruit unto everlaſting life. The holy ſcriptures contain the ſeed which they ſow and caſt into the hearts of men; the law, which concludeth all under ſin, and denounces awful threatenings againſt tranſgreſſion, and the goſpel, which exhibits redemption from all iniquity, and brings to light life and immortality.—The word of inſtruction, reproof, exhortation, trial, comfort, or whatever is ſuited to the ſeveral conditions of thoſe to whom they miniſter. This ſeed they diſpenſe with perſevering induſtry; in the morning they ſow it, in the evening they withhold not their hands; being inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon. They ſow with much dexterity and ſkill, wiſely ſuiting the nature and the quantity of

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the grain to the particular capacities and ſituations of thoſe from whom they expect to reap thirty, ſixty, and an hundred fold. They carefully attend to the moſt proper ſeaſons of communicating divine truths and precepts with the beſt advantage, ſo as no ſeed may be loſt, but that all may yield plentiful increaſe to praiſe, and honour, and glory. And, as here expreſſed, they ſow beſide all waters; which, according to the interpretation given by the angel in the book of Revelation, ſignify, 'peoples, and multitudes, and 'nations, and tongues *.' Agreeable to this expoſition, the perſons deſcribed explain and inculcate the word of God to all the populous kingdoms of the world; and in thoſe places eſpecially which ſeem beſt adapted to produce the largeſt returns for their labour. This precious ſeed being quickened and watered by the influences of the Spirit, yields ſuch plentiful increaſe as huſbandmen receive from the richeſt and moſt fertile ſoils which are ſituated by the banks of rivers.

That ſend forth thither the feet of the ox and the aſs. Theſe animals were anciently uſed in plowing the ground, and preparing it for the ſeed that was to be caſt into it. The uſeful ſervice they performed in agriculture repreſented the far more valuable labours of the ſervants of God, whom he ſends forth into the world, that with induſtry and perſeverance they may prepare the minds of men 'for receiving the goſpel 'which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; 'and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth alſo in you, ſince 'the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in 'truth †.' Perſons induſtriouſly employed in this good work may expect to enjoy our Prophet's benediction. Happy, happy indeed, muſt they be who are engaged in the moſt honourable and glorious employment of being miniſters of the New Teſtament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; of being workers together with God in promoting the ſalvation of mankind, and of eradicating from the human heart the ſeeds of error

* Rev. xvii. 15. † Col. i. 6.

ror and vice, and beſprinkling them with the ſeeds of truth and virtue. Truly bleſſed are they who, inſtructed and aſſiſted by the Spirit of all grace, are faithful ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, miniſtering the goſpel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt *: ſuch have the joyful proſpect of an abundant recompenſe of reward. Diligence, diligence is the duty of the day; the call both of the Old and the New Teſtament: The Maſter, the work, and the ſucceſs, all unite in this demand, *Sow beſide all waters.* How animating the encouragement, 'They that ſow in tears ſhall reap in joy, and ſhall 'doubtleſs come again with rejoicing, bringing their 'ſheaves with them.'

* Rom xv. 16.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE concluding part of the ſecond diſcourſe, contained in the third book of Iſaiah's prophecies, lies now before us. Having given a beautiful deſcription of the proſperous ſtate of the church after the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, and having mentioned the divine judgments that were to fall like hail upon Aſſyria and Babylon, our Prophet proceeds farther to depict the calamities which God, according to the law of retaliation, was about to inflict upon thoſe who were to oppoſe and injure his people. The Aſſyrians invaded the land of Judea, and led captive its inhabitants, for the ſake of rapine and conqueſt; but the Syrians harraſſed and afflicted them on account of religion; for which the Jews ſuffered from that people the moſt ſevere and violent perſecution, whilſt death in various ſhapes every where preſented itſelf to the confeſſors of the truth. In ſuch a ſeaſon of peril and diſtreſs, the ſervants of God ſtood much in need of ſtrong conſolation, that thro' faith and patience of the ſcriptures they might have hope; and of divine inſtruction how they ought to behave under the preſſure of heavy calamities, and after their deliverance from trouble. Our Prophet, therefore, having been favoured with a clear repreſentation of the circumſtances that ſhould befal the people of God, at the period to which he now looked forward, proceeds to narrate the remarkable events which he was inſtructed were then to happen.—This prophetic oration commences with an addreſs to ſome mighty treacherous plunderer of the church of God, by whom they had been oppreſſed, and their land deſolated; againſt whom miſery and wo is denounced, ver. 1.—Then follows fervent ſupplication unto God, that he would be pleaſed to grant to his people conſtant gracious aſſiſtance, which it is intimated would be attended with happy ſucceſs, v. 2, 3.—The overthrow of their enemies by means of divine

vine judgments, is attributed to Almighty God, who on that account is highly extolled, ver. 4, 5.—The beſt means of preſerving the divine favour and protection, of which they had received ſubſtantial proofs, is next pointed out in v. 6.—A tragical deſcription is immediately introduced of the depopulated deplorable condition to which the land of Canaan was ſubjected by ſome powerful enraged enemy, v. 7—9.—Jehovah is next repreſented as preparing to execute terrible vengeance on his own and his people's adverſaries, whom he would utterly deſtroy and conſume, v. 10—12.—A ſatisfying vindication is then brought forward of the equity of divine judgments, and of the awful ſeverity manifeſted upon this occaſion, v. 13—16.—The flouriſhing ſtate of the church reſcued from the oppreſſion of every adverſe power, happy under the care of the Lord of hoſts, whoſe glory and beauty were then to be conſpicuous, is exhibited in an elegant diverſity of language, v. 17—20.—The diſcourſe concludes with reciting the precious benefits to be enjoyed by the church from the period here referred to, until the commencement of the New Teſtament diſpenſation, and the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of God, v. 21. to the end.

CHAP. XXXIII.

WO to thee that ſpoileſt, and thou *waſt* not ſpoiled; and dealeſt treacherouſly, and they dealt not treacherouſly with thee! when thou ſhalt ceaſe to ſpoil, thou ſhalt be ſpoiled; *and* when thou ſhalt make an end to deal treacherouſly, they ſhall deal treacherouſly with thee.

Iſaiah begins this portion of his diſcourſe, by denouncing divine judgments againſt ſome perfidious plunderer

plunderer of the people of God, from whom he had not received any juſt ground of provocation. The peculiar characteriſtic whereby this object of divine vengeance is diſcrimitated, requires ſerious attention, that we may diſcover the perſon againſt whom exact retribution is here threatened. He ſpoiled the land of Judea, pillaging with unrelenting violence and cruelty its inhabitants, depriving them of their property and poſſeſſions. He dealt treacherouſly and perfidiouſly with them, toward whom he ought to have acted with uprightneſs and integrity, endeavouring, under ſpecious pretexts of ſolicitude for their welfare, to impoſe upon them, and defraud them of their juſt rights. This odious character accurately delineates the temper and practice of invaders of the inheritance of the Lord, who, inſtigated by the luſt of power, have moſt iniquitouſly filled the world with bloodſhed and devaſtation; and have acted toward the worſhippers of God with the utmoſt falſehood and cruelty. It ſeems, however, to have been directly intended, and to be peculiarly applicable either to Senacherib king of Aſſyria, or rather, as I ſuppoſe with the learned Vitringa, to Antiochus, ſirnamed Epiphanes, or the illuſtrious, king of Syria, that deſpicable, profligate, laſcivious, powerful perſecutor of the ſervants of Jehovah, whoſe perfidy and rapacity correſponded with the deſcription contained in this verſe. Indeed there ſeems to have been a more remarkable coincidence between the circumſtances ſpecified in this prediction, and the conduct of this vile perſon, as he is called by the prophet Daniel, than that of the king of Aſſyria.—The judgment threatened exactly ſuits the enormous crimes it was intended to puniſh.

Thou ſhalt be ſpoiled, &c. Thou ſhalt receive the juſt recompenſe of thy atrocious wickedneſs; with the ſame meaſure thou haſt meted to others, it ſhall be meaſured to thee again. In thy puniſhment, men ſhall ſee the portrait of thy deteſtable tranſgreſſions. The falſehood and cruelty which thou haſt ſhewn to other

other people, ſhall return upon thine own head. 'The 'Lord is known by the judgment which he execu- 'teth; the wicked ſhall be ſnared in the work of his 'own hands *.' 'Thy miſchief ſhall return upon 'thy own head, and thy violent dealing ſhall come 'down upon thy own pate †.' And the world ſhall acknowledge the equity of that procedure which returns the miſchief upon the guilty, which they inflicted upon the innocent. The Lord is not only true and righteous in the puniſhment that he executes, but there is oft times a ſtriking reſemblance betwixt the ſin and the puniſhment. Thoſe who, by fraud and barbarity, have injured and diſtreſſed the ſervants of the Moſt High, ſhall be recompenſed according to their works; and ſhall experience, in the courſe of providence, that as they have done, it ſhall be done to them. Thus ſaith the Lord by the prophet Habakkuk, 'Becauſe thou haſt ſpoiled many nations, 'all the remnant of the people ſhall ſpoil thee ‡.' The ſentence pronounced upon Babylon runs thus: 'Reward her as ſhe rewarded you §.' And in the words before us, I ſuppoſe the perſecuting king of Syria, with his followers, is thus threatened: 'Wo 'to thee that ſpoileſt, thou ſhalt be ſpoiled.'—Let us therefore unite with the angel of the waters, ſaying, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and waſt, 'and ſhalt be; becauſe thou haſt judged thus: for 'they have ſhed the blood of ſaints and prophets, 'and thou haſt given them blood to drink, for they 'are worthy ||.'

When thou ſhalt ceaſe to ſpoil, &c. Theſe words mark the time wherein the threatened judgment ſhould be executed. The expreſſion doth not intimate that the perſon whom our Prophet had in view, was to deſiſt from rapine and treachery, in conſequence of true repentance, which might have prevented the retribution of his crimes. It ſeems rather to intimate, that weary of perpetrating the flagrant enormities

* Pſal. ix. 16. † Pſal. vii. 15, 16. ‡ Chap. ii. 8.
§ Rev. xviii. 6. || Rev. xvi. 5. 6.

enormities to which he had been addicted, and that the ſpoils which he had violently laid hold of, being nearly exhauſted, he thought little more could be gained by perſevering in rapacity and robbery. His rancour and fury being in ſome meaſure abated, and his wicked career of injuſtice and oppreſſion, having rendered him completely odious and contemptible; a juſt recompenſe in kind was to be made to him, according to the maxims of the divine procedure, which give the moſt explicit aſſurance on this ſubject. 'He 'that leadeth into captivity, ſhall go into captivity; 'he that killeth with the ſword, ſhall be killed by 'the ſword *.' 'Whoſo ſtoppeth his ears at the cry 'of the poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, but ſhall not be 'heard †.' Many inſtances might be adduced of the truth I have been illuſtrating. The inſidious perſecutors of Shadrach, Meſhech and Abednego, were caſt into the very furnace from which theſe innocent men were miraculouſly delivered. The accuſers of Daniel were thrown into the ſame den of lions from whence this beloved man was taken out in ſafety. Indeed, God ſeldom fails to give miſchievous cruel men to drink of the ſame cup which they put into the hands of his ſervants, as the moſt accurate obſervers of providence have uniformly acknowledged. On malignant perſons of this ſort God often ſets a mark, vengeance doth not ſuffer them to live; ſo that no ſooner is their work done, than proper retribution is made to them for their crimes.—Men ought, therefore, cautiouſly to avoid vexing and ſpoiling the people of God, who are the excellent ones of the earth, who are dear in God's ſight, who form the beſt ſociety in the world, to which the Moſt High hath promiſed his divine preſence. No wonder then, that the Governor among the nations hath ſolemnly declared, that thoſe who malign and haraſs the objects of his love and care ſhall be ſuitably puniſhed.

2 O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited

* Rev. xiii. 10. † Prov. xxi. 13.

waited for thee: Be thou their arm every morning, our ſalvation alſo in the time of trouble.

Our Prophet, perſonating the church, addreſſes fervent ſupplication to God, that he would be pleaſed to favour them with his kind protection in the time of their affliction.—The prayer is directed to Jehovah, who, according to his ſovereign pleaſure, orders all human affairs, and by whoſe mercy and grace, his people are preſerved alive upon the earth. They requeſt that God would be gracious unto them; that he would have compaſſion upon them, and ſeaſonably ſhew them favour. They aſcribe nothing to their own merits; nothing to their own power; nor do they expreſs hopes of receiving human aid, which at this time could hardly be expected. On the contrary, perceiving that they had greatly tranſgreſſed againſt God, and fully perſuaded, that all their future fortunes depended entirely upon him; they humbly entreat, that he would be gracious—that as they ſuffered the greateſt hardſhips, and the moſt barbarous treatment from the malice of men, whom they had not injured, ſo they might experience merciful deliverance from God, whoſe compaſſions fail not.—Jehovah, my brethren, is infinitely, unchangeably, and eternally merciful and gracious in his own nature; but his diſpenſations vary according to his good pleaſure, and the ſeveral ſituations of his people. At one time they acknowledge that he ſhews them kindneſs with the utmoſt liberality; and at another, when he reſtrains the communications of his favour, they ſay, Will he be gracious no more, in forgiving the evil we have done, in extricating us from the miſeries wherein we are involved, and conferring the benefits we have forfeited? On this occaſion, when God's judgments were abroad among them, ſenſible of their need of mercy and grace, they have recourſe to God all-ſufficient, as their only city of refuge, as the only

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anchor of their hope, and their help in the day of trouble.

We have waited for thee, to whom we direct our prayers, and will look up. We wait for thee the God of ſalvation, who ſeaſonably diſpenſes aſſiſtance and relief, according to the neceſſities of thy humble ſuppliants. This devout employment which does honour to God, and expreſſes the lively expectation of his ſaints, occupies and regulates the entire frame of their minds, reſpecting the diſpenſations of providence, and the accompliſhment of God's promiſes.—Having explained this becoming temper, when treating of the grateful acknowledgment of the church recorded chap. xxv. 9. I ſhall not at preſent reſume the ſubject, but proceed to conſider the requeſt immediately ſubjoined.

Be thou their arm every morning, &c. The church intercedes, not only for themſelves, but for their brethren, employed in counteracting the hoſtile deſigns of their enemies—Entreating that the Lord of hoſts, who muſtereth the armies of battle, might by his invincible power (which is frequently the import of the arm of Jehovah mentioned in ſcripture) ſupport and defend them in executing their enterpriſes; that he would endow them with heroic courage, ſkill, and prudence; that he would preſerve them from diſcord, and every thing that might prove a reproach to the good cauſe in which they were embarked; that he would render their way proſperous; and enable them to vanquiſh their formidable adverſaries. Such ſeems to be the import of the requeſt which they were ſolicitous might be granted *every morning*. The noble defenders of the truth being every day expoſed to new difficulties and dangers, they would daily require new interpoſitions of divine providence in their behalf, which are entreated to be early and ſeaſonably afforded to them; that light may ariſe upon them amid the darkneſs of affliction and calamity.—*Our ſalvation alſo in the time of trouble.* The ſaints requeſt that Almighty God would be pleaſed, not only

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to ſupport and protect by his omnipotent arm, their companions engaged in their defence; but that he would grant them complete deliverance from the troubles with which they were diſtreſſed. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; it is his peculiar prerogative, and he alone can beſtow it. He raiſes up ſaviours whom he employs as inſtruments to reſcue his people from their foes, and by whom he conveys to them this ineſtimable bleſſing; but on him alone entirely depends their efficacy and their ſucceſs. 'Truly 'in vain is ſalvation hoped for from the hills and 'the multitude of mountains *,' from the greateſt means, and the moſt powerful human aſſiſtance. 'In 'the Lord our God is the ſalvation of Iſrael.'—In this excellent prayer, dictated by the Spirit of grace, which is well adapted to our circumſtances, let us all cordially unite, eſpecially in troublous times. Freſh occaſion of renewing our applications to the throne of grace is every day adminiſtered. Our temporal intereſts, what relates to life, to health, to friends, to proſperity, to adverſity, and above all, our ſpiritual concerns, and the welfare of the church of God, ſuggeſt the propriety, the neceſſity of calling often on the Lord. Our ſafety and happineſs depend wholly upon him, and are intimately connected with the conduct of thoſe over whom we have no influence, and therefore reaſon and ſcripture require that we frequently beg of God to be gracious unto us.

3 At the noiſe of the tumult the people fled: at the lifting up of thyſelf the nations were ſcattered.

The remarkable interpoſition of Jehovah in favour of his afflicted people, as the happy effect of the preceding fervent ſupplication, is immediately ſubjoined.—The tranſlation of the firſt part of this verſe given by the learned Dr Lowth, ſeems preferable to our Engliſh verſion, which is very obſcure. The

* Jer. iii. 23.

Biſhop renders it, 'From thy terrible voice, the peo-'ple fled.' According to this interpretation, the words exhibit a lively image of a ſudden general alarm, occaſioned by ſome awful tremenduous voice, proceeding from the Moſt High, whereby the enemies of his people, who were aſſembled in great numbers, affrighted and aſtoniſhed, fled in confuſion with the utmoſt precipitation. Being in this manner intimidated, they were wholly diſperſed and entirely routed. In conſequence of this wonderful interpoſition in behalf of the church, we may adopt the words of a beautiful hymn addreſſed to God, 'At 'thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder 'they haſted away *.'

At the lifting up of thyſelf the nations were ſcattered. The lifting up, or exaltation of Jehovah, may denote the glorious diſplays which he gave of his majeſty, power, and righteouſneſs, in the diſperſion and overthrow of the inveterate enemies of his upright ſervants, who were driven away as chaff before the wind. How highly elevated above all oppoſition, doth God appear, when he infatuates and turns their counſels into fooliſhneſs; when he deprives them of wiſdom and prudence, ſo that their folly becomes conſpicuous! What incomparable majeſty and grandeur doth he manifeſt, when he bereaves them of judgment and underſtanding, ſo that they act under the influence of rage and fury, like madmen, who miſapply their great ſtrength to miſchievous purpoſes—When he ſtrikes them with terror and conſternation, diveſts them of ſpirit and courage, ſo that they become weak and timid. Thus diſpirited, miſguided, and diſarmed, their hands cannot perform their enterpriſes. By few diſpenſations of providence is God ſo greatly magnified as by the diſperſion of the nations which are adverſe to the intereſts of his kingdom. He thereby ſhews to the world, that he is high above all gods, that he is mightier than the tumults of the people; that no obſtacles can reſiſt his power;

* Pſalm civ. 7.

er; that no ſubtilty can eſcape his obſervation, or prevent the accompliſhment of his deſigns. In ſuch diſpenſations, mercy is magnified, power is admired, wiſdom is adored, righteouſneſs is vindicated, and faithfulneſs is celebrated.—Let us then improve ſeaſons of affliction, and impending danger, in earneſt ſupplication to God, who is a ſtrength to the needy in his diſtreſs. In times of this ſort, the Iſraelites, and afterwards the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, were moſt inſtant in ſucceſsful prayer. Every trouble reminds us of God, and every ſignal deliverance whereby he is exalted, affords a powerful argument and encouragement to ſeek the Lord, and his ſtrength, and his face for evermore.

4 And your ſpoil ſhall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locuſts ſhall he run upon them.

In theſe words, which ſeem to be directed to thoſe who had ſpoiled the people of God, they are informed, that in conſequence of their conqueſt and flight, their ſpoils ſhould be collected by thoſe whom they had formerly rifled and plundered.—The ſubject is illuſtrated by two ſimilitudes, with which Iſaiah's countrymen were well acquainted. The firſt is taken from the inſect called the caterpillar, which appear in vaſt numbers promiſcuouſly without obſerving any order, and direct their courſe into ſome field that is planted or ſown, and faſtening on its fruits or corns, they gather and conſume whatever affords them ſupport and proviſion. In like manner, the Iſraelites reſcued from the power of their oppreſſors, were to convene, without regard to order, in great multitudes; that they might ſeize upon the booty of thoſe who had ſpoiled and robbed them. As caterpillars tear off the leaves from the trees, and the blades from the ſhrubs and the corns, devouring and collecting for their own uſe whatever they find agreeable; ſo the poſterity of Jacob, were to gather in the camps and fields of thoſe who had plundered them, whatever ſeemed

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to be valuable and uſeful, that they might employ it to their own purpoſes. As caterpillars feed in the fields whereon they alight, without fear of moleſtation or injury, and perſevere in their deſtructive operations, until every thing conducive to their advantage is conſumed; ſo the Iſraelites were, without diſmay, to lay hold of the pillage of their adverſaries, from which they would not deſiſt until it was altogether collected.—*As the running to and fro of locuſts*, &c. The ſecond ſimilitude is taken from the inſect called the locuſt, which having long legs, runs hither and thither with great agility in thoſe places where it frequents. Their ſwift irregular motions are here mentioned, as preſenting a ſignificant emblem of the inhabitants of Canaan, running with rapidity, in every direction, with the ſpoils of their oppreſſors, which they had gathered at their pleaſure, every one taking that part of the pillage that ſeemed to him moſt deſirable.—The happineſs and joy felt by the conquerors of a defeated army, who after a ſtrong and dubious conteſt, having obtained the victory, find great ſpoil, repreſents the ſtill greater felicity and triumph which the ſervants of God experience in the treaſure of his bleſſed word. The gain, the joy, and the comfort which it imparts to thoſe who ſearch into its hidden ſtores, are inexpreſſible, and far exceed whatever reſults from the moſt glorious conqueſt, and the collection of the moſt valuable ſpoils on earth. Permit me, therefore, to embrace this opportunity of calling you to aſpire after the high gratification derived from the teſtimonies of God, by the upright among men.

Though the prophecy under conſideration hath been applied by ſome learned commentators to the Aſſyrian invaſion of Judea, and the ſubſequent judgments inflicted upon theſe implacable enemies of the people of God; I rather ſuppoſe, that our prophet, who had already predicted theſe important events, treats in this excellent diſcourſe, of the dreadful perſecution raiſed by the Syrians againſt the church of God, their happy deliverance from oppreſſion, and the

the overthrow of the kingdom of Syria, after having ſuſtained a long ſeries of calamities. This opinion, I am inclined to adopt for various reaſons too tedious to mention, and particularly on account of the exact correſpondence of the ſeveral parts of this prophecy with the circumſtances related by the writer of the books of the Maccabees. Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned over Syria in the one hundred and forty-third year of the Grecian empire, went againſt Iſrael and Jeruſalem with a great multitude; he ſpoiled the city, and ſet it on fire; he entered the ſanctuary, and took away the golden altar, with all the precious veſſels and hidden treaſures which he found, notwithſtanding he ſpake peaceably unto them; he committed the moſt barbarous cruelties, and practiſed the moſt deteſtible perfidy *. This ſeems to be the ſpoiler who dealt treacherouſly. This murderer and blaſphemer (ſaith the hiſtorian, 2 Mac. chap. ix. 28.) having ſuffered moſt grievouſly, as he treated other men, died a miſerable death in a ſtrange country. The prayer preſented to God, and its happy ſucceſs, bears a ſtriking reſemblance to the ſupplication, and its effects, recorded 1 Mac. iv. 30. *et ſeq.* and 2 Mac. x. 25. *et ſeq.* The prediction relative to the gathering of the ſpoil, was remarkably verified when the Jews were made ſtrong, by the armour and large quantity of ſpoils, which they took of the armies which they deſtroyed, 2 Mac. vi. 6.

5 The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath bleſſed Zion with judgment and righteouſneſs.

The praiſes of Jehovah are celebrated in this verſe on account of the illuſtrious diſplay given of his majeſty, righteouſneſs, power, and grace, in vindicating his people from thraldom, and overthrowing their enemies.—He is firſt extolled *becauſe he dwelleth on high*, having his ſeat in the excellent glory, which is far above

* See 1 Mac. Chap. i.

bove the viſible heavens, where are exhibited the ſymbols of his divine preſence and grandeur. Though by the immenſity of his nature he is preſent every where; heaven is his dwelling place, the habitation of his holineſs, and of his glory, where he manifeſts, to admiring celeſtial hoſts, his infinite excellencies and tranſcendant beauty. For this reaſon he is frequently magnified by the ſaints in thoſe ſacred odes compoſed for the uſe of the church. Thus the inraptured poet exclaims, 'Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high *.' And in the words before us, the Lord is exalted, for he dwelleth on high. He is alſo exalted, *For he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteouſneſs.* By the events referred to, he hath given public demonſtration to all nations, that he is the one true God, the righteous governor of the world, the defender of his church, who avenges the wrongs done to them; that he obſerves all the injuries which they ſuſtain, and in his appointed time will interpoſe for their deliverance. By inflicting juſt judgments, he hath puniſhed the wicked and profane, he hath detected the inſincere and hypocritical, and diſcriminated them from the upright and the righteous; whilſt he hath tried, approved, and defended the genuine confeſſors of the truth. By theſe and ſimilar diſpenſations, Zion, the church of God hath been purged of falſe profeſſors, vindicated from the tyranny of their adverſaries; whilſt right hearted men have been incited to the diligent ſtudy and practice of true piety, holineſs, and virtue. Thus this prediction was remarkably verified at the time to which our prophet looked forward, when according to the word of the Lord, by Zechariah, 'In all the land two 'parts ſhall be cut off and die. And I will bring the 'third part through the fire, and will refine them as 'ſilver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried,' † &c.—The magnificence and glory of Jehovah, who is highly exalted above all nations, illuſtriouſly diſplayed in ſubduing the enemies of his people, and in purifying

* Pſal. cxiii. 5. † Chap. xiii. 9.

fying his church, ought to induce us to celebrate the praiſes of his great name, and to extol the holineſs of his procedure, in which juſtice and mercy are always wiſely blended together. 'Let us praiſe his great and terrible name for it is holy *.'

6 And wiſdom, and knowledge ſhall be the ſtability of thy times, *and* ſtrength of ſalvation: the fear of the LORD *is* his treaſure.

This ſublime ſentiment, addreſſed to the prince or ruler of the people of God, clearly ſhews in what manner their proſperity and felicity are to be preſerved and perpetuated. The only way by which a nation can have its happineſs extended, is by wiſdom, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Theſe are the ſupports of a ſtate; theſe give eſtabliſhment to the period wherein they flouriſh.—Wiſdom and knowledge, though intimately connected, ought to be diſtinguiſhed. Knowledge, which precedes wiſdom, conſiſts in acquaintance with the nature, the qualities, the relations, and ends of the various objects of contemplation and ſtudy, and ſtands oppoſed to ignorance and want of information. Wiſdom chiefly reſpects practice, and teaches to purſue the higheſt and moſt valuble ends, by the beſt and moſt probable means; ſo that according to the proverb, it is profitable to direct, and forms a counterpart to folly or want of prudence. There may be much knowledge where there is little wiſdom; but wiſdom neceſſarily ſuppoſes ſome meaſure of knowledge. As there is a natural knowledge which puffeth up, and a worldly wiſdom which God will bring to nought; ſo there is a ſpiritual knowledge, and divine wiſdom, which God giveth to them that are good in his ſight. The knowledge here ſpoken of, is that valuable acquiſition which is attained by the careful inveſtigation of the ways of God, and the diligent ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures; which through the divine bleſſing, produce

* Pſal. xcix. 3.

duce true repentance and reformation, unſhaken confidence in the promiſes of Jehovah, a clear underſtanding of the way of ſalvation, and the will of God, with the exerciſe of true godlineſs and every virtue.

The wiſdom intended by our Prophet, is that excellent diſpoſition whereby the peculiar people of God, under the conduct of ſanctified reaſon, from good principles and intimate acquaintance with the word of God, prudently and circumſpectly adjuſt their actions, ſo as they may moſt effectually advance the glory of God, the edification of their neighbour, and their own ſalvation. Theſe important qualifications extending their benign influence not only to the rulers of the ſtate, but diffuſing themſelves through the whole maſs of the people,

Shall be the ſtability of thy times. They ſhall impart ſupport and firmneſs, continuance and perpetuity to the proſperous ſeaſon, and yield valuable opportunities of improving the eſtabliſhment of the church, and extending their tranquillity. They who compoſe this ſelect ſociety, poſſeſſing theſe valuable endowments, ſhall act with ſuch intelligence and ſkill, and adopt ſuch judicious prudent meaſures, as ſhall promote not only their own individual ſtedfaſtneſs, but the proſperity of the whole collective body, which ſhall reſt not on an uncertain, but on a firm foundation.—*And ſtrength of ſalvation.* Wiſdom and knowledge ſhall invigorate, confirm, and extend the poſſeſſion of the ſalvation you have attained; they ſhall excite the lively expectation of the farther and more full enjoyment of this ineſtimable benefit, both in this and the future world. They ſhall conduce to perpetuate the happineſs reſulting from the deliverances that you have experienced, and to lengthen your proſperity. They are indiſpenſibly requiſite to ſpiritual ſalvation. Is not the illumination of the mind, and acquaintance with divine truths, eſſentially neceſſary to reſcue from the power of darkneſs, and to direct in the paths of righteouſneſs? Is not the proſecution of the higheſt ends by the beſt means of

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equal neceſſity to preſerve from ſeeking our own glory, and to deliver from the ſervice of divers luſts and pleaſures. Bleſſed with theſe noble acquiſitions, which are eſſential ingredients in ſalvation, wherein much of its ſtrength conſiſts; you may look forward with hope and joy, to its conſummation in complete freedom from all evil, and the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of all good.—Surely I may now with a good grace urge you diligently to ſeek for wiſdom and knowledge, which Solomon calls the principal thing; to the attainment of which you ought to apply your hearts, and to bend your ſtudies. They are good and perfect gifts which come from above, and proceed from the Father of lights. They are pure, free from alloy, and baſe mixture, from corruption and pollution—they are peaceable, neither injuring other people, nor avenging the wrongs they have ſuſtained; but following the things that make for peace and edification—they are gentle, moderate in their ſentiments and converſation, and mild in cenſures and in conduct—Eaſy to be intreated, to be diſſuaded from what is bad, and perſuaded to what is good and uſeful—Full of mercy; ready to relieve thoſe that are in want, and to forgive thoſe who have offended—And of good fruits of holineſs and righteouſneſs, which through Jeſus Chriſt, are to the glory of God.

The fear of the Lord is his treaſure. Fear is a ſtrong paſſion, which the author of nature hath implanted in the human mind, ariſing from the ſenſation or proſpect of ſome real or ſuppoſed evil; it is highly uſeful to guard againſt danger, and to regulate human conduct. The fear of the Lord is a devout affection that God conveys into the hearts of his people, which produces moſt important effects on their temper and practice, and extends its ſalutary influence throughout the whole of life. It operates by humble reverence for the majeſty and perfections of Jehovah, who is infinitely great, and greatly to be feared. It occupies the mind with a ſacred awe of the divine authority, that prompts to circumſpection

and vigilance, that guards againſt ſin, and ſtimulates to the faithful performance of duty. It fills the heart, not with ſlaviſh dread and terror of the judgments of the Almighty, but with ſuch a ſolemn apprehenſion and awe of them, as proves a powerful reſtraint from evil. It diſpoſes devoutly to admire the divine excellencies, to celebrate the praiſes of infinite goodneſs, to live under the ſenſe of his immediate inſpection, who trieth the reins; whilſt it repreſſes diſtreſſing timidity and anxiety as to worldly objects.—This becoming temper is emphatically ſaid to be *his treaſure* who dwelleth in Zion, the church of God, which he hath filled with righteouſneſs. It juſtly merits this deſcription, on account of its real worth and excellence, being one of thoſe precious benefits which God confers upon his ſervants who are devoted to this fear. It is a treaſure which this world cannot afford, which the grace of the Moſt High only imparts, and gives only to the choſen and called of God. It is a treaſure depoſited in the hearts of the faithful; that it may be there kept ſafe, and brought into view for uſeful purpoſes, on every proper occaſion. It is a treaſure which cannot be poſſeſſed without jealouſy, without caution, and without joy; and gives true happineſs to all who eſteem it, and act under its influence. It is a treaſure which conveys immenſe riches to its poſſeſſors; for where it is laid up, there are the precious fruits of the divine favour, the pledges of eternal ſalvation, with every bleſſing requiſite to true felicity.—That you may enjoy this precious treaſure of the fear of the Lord, endeavour to acquire increaſing acquaintance with the perfections and glory of Jehovah. Frequently contemplate the various diſplays given of them in the works and word of God, and render them familiar to your minds, until you find thoſe correſponding diſpoſitions ariſe in your ſouls which they are intended to excite. Be fervent in prayer to the God of all grace, that by his Spirit he may put within you this holy fear, and enable you effectually to diſcover its influence in the whole of your temper and conduct.

7 Behold,

7 Behold, their valiant ones ſhall cry without: the ambaſſadors of peace ſhall weep bitterly.

Our Prophet next deſcribes, in a moving manner, various circumſtances relative to the great calamities inflicted upon the people of God, by the perfidious ſpoiler againſt whom he had denounced wo and miſery.—The valiant, the ſtouteſt and braveſt perſons in the land, who were remarkable for ſtrength and valour, the chief officers in the army, the leaders of the people, renowned for heroic courage and proweſs.—Intimidated by their preſent perilous condition, and the forlorn ſituation of their countrymen in imminent danger, were to *cry without*, loudly bewailing with bitter lamentations, the complicated diſtreſſes to which they and their fellow citizens were reduced; and with loud cries and earneſt ſupplications to intreat the divine interpoſition in their behalf.—*The ambaſſadors of peace ſhall weep bitterly.* The meſſengers of the Lord of hoſts who were delegated to the important work of negotiating peace betwixt God and man, whoſe office was to maintain the honour of Jehovah, to offer ſacrifices for ſin, and to bring men into a ſtate of reconciliation with their Maker. Perſons of this character having been expelled from Jeruſalem, and the temple, wherein they had been accuſtomed to officiate; were to ſhew the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of ſorrow and anguiſh, for the loſs of the privileges they had long enjoyed, and the many hardſhips which they now ſuffered. It is unneceſſary to enlarge; the words before us ſimply narrate the afflictive condition to which perſons of the greateſt reſpectability, men holding the higheſt offices in the ſtate and in the church, were to be reduced, at the period to which this prediction referred. The greateſt, as well as the leaſt, were to be involved in the general calamity, and to give ſtriking proofs of their grief and diſtreſs.

8 The high ways lie waſte, the wayfaring man

man ceaſeth: he hath broken the covenant; he hath deſpiſed the cities; he regardeth no man.

In this and the following verſe a very affecting repreſentation is given of the univerſal deſolation which had overſpread the land of Judea, by means of the mercileſs ravages of the inveterate enemies of the Jews.—Trade and commerce, as well as the public exerciſes of religion, being neglected, the high ways, that in former times were occupied by vaſt numbers of travellers, going on buſineſs from place to place; at ſtated ſeaſons reſorting to Jeruſalem to obſerve the appointed ſolemnities, and returning home from the ſacred feſtivals, were at this period to be deſerted by thoſe who had been accuſtomed to frequent them. In conſequence whereof, being neglected and not kept in repair, they would aſſume a deſolate appearance.—*He hath broken the covenant.* The powerful perfidious enemy of the men of Judah made void the covenant, which that people had entered into with God, when they ſolemnly engaged religiouſly to obſerve the inſtitutions of divine worſhip, and the commandments of the divine law, by ſtrictly prohibiting, and forcibly obliging them to abſtain from the ſervice of God, and the obedience of his precepts.—*He hath deſpiſed the cities.* Deſtitute of all regard to truth and equity, he contemned all the remonſtrances, petitions for mercy, and appeals to juſtice, which were preſented to him by the diſtreſſed inhabitants of the moſt populous reſpectable cities in Judea.—*He regarded no man.* He paid not the leaſt reſpect to perſons of any ſtation, of any character, age, or condition; he ſhewed no favour to the honourable, nor compaſſion to the poor and helpleſs. How deplorable at this time muſt have been the ſtate of the land and of its inhabitants.

9 The earth mourneth *and* languiſheth; Lebanon is aſhamed *and* hewn down; Sharon is like

like a wilderneſs; and Baſhan and Carmel ſhake off *their fruits.*

The lamentable conſequences of the predicted devaſtation are here drawn in ſtrong and glowing colours.—The earth, which formerly ſeemed to be glad, and to rejoice in yielding rich luxuriant crops, for the uſe of man and beaſt, now aſſumed a dreary gloomy aſpect, as if ſenſible of its deſolate condition. The people of Judea, deeply diſtreſſed by their calamitous ſtate, were in plaintive ſtrains to mourn over the complicated miſeries which they ſuſtained; they were to droop and languiſh through great affliction and ſorrow.—*Lebanon is aſhamed.* In the ſequel of this beautiful deſcription, character and action are elegantly aſſigned to inanimate objects, to which are attributed a degree of life and ſentiment ſuited to the mournful occaſion. A probable, but fictitious paſſion of ſhame is aſcribed to Lebanon, a celebrated mountain in the land of Judea. Had the magnificent foreſt with which it was covered, been capable of ſenſations felt by the human kind, it would have bluſhed for having been ſtript of the lofty cedars wherewith it was clothed, that they might be applied in conſtructing military inſtruments and engines.—*Sharon is like a wilderneſs.* Sharon was the name of a very rich and fertile country, ſituated between Ceſarea and Joppa, toward the Mediterranean Sea, where large flocks of fine cattle were fed. It abounded not only with the fineſt corns and graſs, but with the beſt vines, and the moſt beautiful flowers and roſes. This diſtrict of the land of Judah, remarkable for its luxuriant productions, was entirely to change its appearance, and to reſemble a barren uncultivated deſart.—*And Baſhan and Carmel ſhake off their fruits.* The land of Baſhan was ſituated beyond Jordan, and was ſometimes called the land of giants, on account of the large ſtature of the inhabitants who once dwelt in that country. The ſoil was exceedingly rich and fruitful; ſo that the bulls, the rams, and the lambs which

which were bred there, were eſteemed the largeſt, ſtrongeſt, and fatteſt that could be found throughout Canaan. Even the trees, as well as the men and the cattle, were famous on account of their great ſize and uncommon excellence. Carmel was likewiſe a very fertile mountain, covered with vines, fruit trees, corns, and paſturage. It is celebrated for having been the place where ſeveral important tranſactions happened that are recorded in ſacred hiſtory. Elijah the prophet there contended with the prophets of Baal, who were all ſlain. At the period whereof our Prophet ſpeaks, ſuch was the deplorable ſtate of Judea, that thoſe places which had been moſt remarkable for fertility and beauty, ſpoiled of the cattle, the corns, and the vines, with which they were formerly covered, ſhould become like a wilderneſs, deſtitute of proviſion and comfort; ſo that thoſe who reſorted thither, were to become a prey to their ferocious enemies.—Why all this deſolation, ſo often threatened, ſo often executed, and ſo often deſcribed, but that people, who behold, or are informed of theſe direful calamities, may be reſtrained from thoſe ſins whereby they were incurred; that they may be inſtructed in the awful effects of the divine diſpleaſure, warned of their danger, and the indiſpenſible neceſſity of true repentance.—This prediction was accompliſhed when Jeruſalem lay void as a wilderneſs; there was none of her children went in or out, the ſanctuary alſo was trodden down, and aliens kept the ſtrong hold.—And the diſtreſſed inhabitants of the land aſſembled, and cried with a loud voice toward heaven, 'How ſhall we be able to ſtand, except 'thou, O God, be our help*?' &c.

10 Now will I riſe, ſaith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myſelf.

Jehovah is here introduced ſpeaking after the manner of a mighty prince, determined to reſcue his peaceable ſubjects from oppreſſion; and to inflict righteous vengeance

* See 1 Mac. iii. 45. *et ſeq.*

vengeance on their inſolent enemies. The meaſure of their iniquities being filled up, and God having exerciſed much long ſuffering toward them, he was going illuſtriouſly to diſplay his glory by ſeverely puniſhing their enormous wickedneſs. *Now will I riſe;* after having ſhewn for a conſiderable time, forbearance toward the treacherous adverſaries of my people, and the time of their triumph being over. I have reſolutely purpoſed to repay all the injuries they have done to my inheritance.—*Now will I be exalted.* The glory of my majeſty, power, and righteouſneſs, in vindicating my people from the wrongs they have ſuſtained, ſhall be manifeſted before all nations; and thus will I make my name to be revered and honoured throughout all the earth.—*Now will I lift up myſelf.* This is the proper opportunity, the time appropriated in my decree, as moſt favourable for the exhibition of my glory, before the eyes of men with the higheſt advantage. The repetition of the word *now* plainly intimates, that the period marked by the calamities mentioned in ver. 9. was the time wherein the Almighty was to interpoſe without delay, in favour of his oppreſſed church.—In due time, Jehovah will certainly be exalted in the puniſhment of thoſe who contemn and abuſe his ſervants. The Philiſtines who dealt deſpitefully with his people, became the objects of awful vengeance, with furious rebukes. Becauſe the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites diſtreſſed them, they were cut off and exterminated, and the Syrians who ſpoiled and dealt perfidiouſly with them, the Lord recompenſed according to their deeds. Let injured innocence then be comforted with the thoughts of an approaching day, when the Lord will ariſe in his anger, lift up himſelf, becauſe of the rage of his enemies, and awake for the judgment he hath commanded *.

11 Ye ſhall conceive chaff; ye ſhall bring forth ſtubble: your breath *as* fire ſhall devour you.

* Pſal. vii. 6.

The

The vanity and inefficacy of the devices formed by the enemies of the church are here repreſented in ſignificant figurative language. Chaff you know is the covering wherein the corn is wrapt, until it is ſeparated from it by the flail, or ſome other inſtrument. Being exceeding light and little worth, it exhibits a juſt emblem of the vain fruitleſs ſchemes formed by wicked men, to deſtroy the people of God. Theſe empty projects were the chaff which our Prophet declares that the perſons whom he addreſſes were to contrive.—*Ye ſhall bring forth*, &c. Stubble is that portion of the ſtraw which is left on the ground after the corn is reaped; and preſents an image of the unprofitable diſproportioned effects which were to reſult from the wicked, fooliſh devices that they had imagined. All the uneaſineſs and travel they endured was not to produce any thing ſubſtantial or ſatisfying. Actions, whether good or bad, are the portrait of the mind from which they proceed, and ſignificantly expreſs the preſent exiſting ſentiments of thoſe by whom they were done. They always bear a ſtrong affinity and reſemblance to the diſpoſitions of thoſe who gave them birth.—*Your breath as fire ſhall devour you.* The breath may denote the words which by means of breathing, proceed from the mouth; the proud blaſphemous vindictive language uttered by the perſons ſpoken of, againſt God and his people. The haughty inſolence and deteſtable cruelty, which ye have outrageouſly expreſſed, ſhall be the means of devouring you as fire doth the fuel. They ſhall kindle a flame in your conſciences that ſhall torment you; they ſhall bring upon you conſuming judgments, and the fierce anger of the Lord, whereby you ſhall utterly periſh.—In the lips of the wicked and profane, ſaith the wiſe man, is a burning fire *; it kindles diſcord and ſtrife; it ſends forth virulent reproaches, which are compared to coals of juniper, and devours what is rather to be choſen than great riches. Let us then take heed unto our words, which

* Prov. xvi. 27.

which extend their influence to every faculty, to every action, to every profeſſion, 'leſt they ſet on fire the 'whole courſe of nature.'

12 And the people ſhall be *as* the burnings of lime; *as* thorns cut up ſhall they be burned in the fire.

After the virulent oppoſition of the enemies of the church had arrived at a prodigious height, an immenſe fire was to conſume and break them to pieces, like ſtones that are burnt in a lime-kiln.—The ſimilitude by which the ſubject is illuſtrated, is familiar and well known. Stones that are burnt into lime, are ſhut up in a furnace kindled by a large fire, which acts upon them with ſo great force, that it diveſts them of their form and qualities, breaks them to pieces, and ſo conſumes them, that they fall into powder. This affords a juſt repreſentation of the terrible judgments of God which were to be inflicted upon the obdurate foes of his people, notorious for their pride, malice, and cruelty. According to this prediction, they were to be ſo encompaſſed, that they ſhould find it impoſſible to eſcape being conſumed in the dreadful manner here deſcribed. Farther to illuſtrate the deplorable ſtate to which they were to be conſigned, another compariſon is ſubjoined—*As thorns cut up*, &c. Having been troubleſome and hurtful to ſociety, like dry thorns, which ſerve for no other purpoſe than to be burnt; they ſhall be caſt into the flames, whereby they ſhall be ſuddenly devoured. Both ſimilitudes ſtrongly intimate the irreſiſtible fury by which they were to be conſumed, by the fire of God's wrath, that ſhould certainly take hold of them to their utter deſtruction.—It is worthy of notice, that when God is about to accompliſh any great revolution in the circumſtances of the church, and to interpoſe in their behalf, he executes awful vengeance upon their enemies. The predictions therefore of glorious deliverance to his people, are interſperſed,

as in this chapter, with declarations of ſignal judgments to be executed on thoſe who have oppoſed and diſtreſſed them. This remark ought to induce each of us to acknowledge with Jethro, 'Now I know 'the Lord is greater than all gods; for in the thing 'wherein they deal proudly he is above them *.'—Thoſe who read with attention the books of the Maccabees, cannot fail to obſerve the terrible conſumption made by divine judgments among the adverſaries of God's ſervants, which ſuddenly and irreſiſtibly devoured them in great numbers.

13 Hear, ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near acknowledge my might.

Our Prophet proceeds with great ability, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to vindicate the divine procedure, manifeſted in the ſevere judgments inflicted upon the enemies of the church. He introduces the ſubject, by calling with great ſolemnity people of every deſcription, and in every ſituation, diligently to attend, and ſeriouſly to conſider the powerful operations of Jehovah; that they might thereby be induced to confeſs his veracity, his righteouſneſs, and tender care of his people; and learn to honour him who ought to be feared. He addreſſes two claſſes of people, which may comprehend the whole human race.—By them that are far off, may be meant the Gentile nations, that under the former diſpenſation, were ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world. Theſe were ſome time afar off from enjoying the privileges of the church; and many of them lived in countries at an immenſe diſtance from the place wherein this ſcene was acted, and at periods very remote from the time in which Iſaiah exerciſed his miniſtry. Being now, however, brought nigh to God, admitted to hear the words of this book, and

* Exod. xviii. 11.

and to participate in the bleſſings of the New Teſtament, they are invited to attend to the glorious demonſtrations given of the omnipotence of Jehovah, in the deliverance of his people, and the deſtruction of their enemies.—By them that are near, may be intended the children of Iſrael, who, by profeſſion, were a people near to God, among whom his ſervants the prophets were immediately employed, and who reſided on the very ſpot where the ſcene was acted, which forms the ſubject of the prophecy under conſideration. In this view the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of them, Eph. ii. 17. where he affirms, that 'Jeſus Chriſt 'came and preached peace to you that were afar off, 'and to them that were nigh.' This call then is directed to all who might either ſee or hear of this wonderful interpoſition of Providence, to which our Prophet claims attention; that men might thereby be induced to give praiſe and obedience to him that liveth and reigneth.—Diligently conſider this glorious work of the Lord our God, and acknowledge his might in thoſe terrible acts whereby he hath wrought the ſalvation of his church, and brought their perſecutors to condign puniſhment. He is mighty to ſave, and mighty to deſtroy; he is terrible to the unrighteous and the wicked, whom he will puniſh with everlaſting deſtruction; he is moſt amiable to the good and the upright, who follow after righteouſneſs, and who keep the truth, whom he graciouſly protects, and will eternally ſave. Let us then liſten to his voice, and acknowledge with veneration and awe his glorious power,

14 The ſinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed the hypocrites: who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?

Having demanded attention from people of every deſcription, Iſaiah, foreſeeing the impending judgments

ments of God, delineates the terror and anguiſh which would thereby be excited in the ungodly and hypocritical.—In the church of God, which in ſcripture is frequently denominated Zion, as in the paſſage before us, there are two claſſes of people very different from each other; namely, the upright and the ſinner. Theſe are alternately mentioned in this chapter; the temper and deſtruction of the latter, the character and privileges of the former, are contraſted in this and the following verſes. To this intereſting ſubject we ought carefully to apply our minds. It is not difficult to appreciate the character of ſinners in Zion. They depart from the right paths wherein they ought to walk, and come ſhort of the great end at which they ought to aim. Averſe to obey, and prone to tranſgreſs the commandments of Jehovah, they are active and aſſiduous in doing iniquity and miſchief. They are obſtinately employed in the commiſſion of various kinds of vice, neglecting the duties which they owe both to God and man. Such are the irreligious, the proud, the voluptuous, the ambitious, the ſlanderous, the perfidious, and the covetous.—Hypocrites endeavour artfully to conceal, under various pretexts, their depravity and wickedneſs, and to perſonate a character they have no right to aſſume, by making a ſhew of that goodneſs to which they are really averſe. They diſguiſe the injurious ſentiments they entertain reſpecting the word, the providence, and the people of God; they act deceitfully both toward God and man; whilſt they profeſs to know God, in works they deny him, being abominable, and to every good work reprobate. In the words of Jeſus Chriſt, 'they appear beautiful outwardly, but within they are full of extortion and exceſs.' People of theſe odious characters are frequently and ſeverely threatened in ſcripture with the moſt terrible judgments; and therefore it is no wonder that in the immediate proſpect of their execution, they, with their fellow ſinners,

Are afraid; fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed them. While under

under the influence of fatal ſecurity and falſe confidence, they promiſed themſelves peace and ſafety; diſtreſs and danger ſtared them in the face, they were ſtruck with ſurpriſe; fear and anguiſh ſeized upon them. Awful diſplays exhibited of the divine power and righteouſneſs, overwhelmed them with terror and diſmay; conſternation and dread ſeized upon them, leſt thoſe calamities ſhould ſuddenly overtake them, which they did not expect or lay to heart. Though formerly unmoved by the loudeſt warnings, and the moſt alarming denunciations of vengeance, which ſounded in their ears, they are now awakened by a ſenſe of impending danger, they are horribly afraid; terrors encompaſs them as waters, and render them amazed on every ſide. How miſerable beyond deſcription their condition! Diſtreſſed by the ſervile debaſing paſſion of fear, ariſing from conſciouſneſs of guilt, dread of puniſhment, and incapacity to reſiſt; they are tortured by the combined effects of timidity and ſurpriſe, of perplexity and horror. Fear that hath torment makes them uneaſy and reſtleſs, and ſubjects them to the moſt abject ſervility and deſpondency. The ſtrongeſt man on earth could not have made them quake ſo terribly as did this fear, when it ſurpriſed and took hold of them. —The following words forcibly expreſs a deep ſenſe of their complicated wickedneſs, and obnoxiouſneſs to the juſt judgments of the Almighty.

Who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? &c. God, my brethren, is repeatedly affirmed in the ſcriptures of truth, to be a 'conſuming fire.' Moſes, when exhorting the Iſraelites to take heed leſt they ſhould forget the covenant of the Lord their God, enforces the caution by this argument, 'For the Lord 'thy God is a conſuming fire *.' By the ſame motive, the writer of the epiſtle to the Hebrews recommends reverence and godly fear in the ſervice of God; for, ſaith he, 'Our God is a conſuming fire †.' Obſerve, that in the former quotation, he to whom this

* Deut. iv. 24. † Heb. xii. 29.

this character is aſcribed is called the *God of Iſrael*; in the latter *our God*, with whom Chriſtians are intimately related, and to whom they are unreſervedly devoted. The deſcription indicates the conſummate purity of his nature; his fervent jealouſy to maintain his honour and glory; his irreſiſtible power, conſpicuous in the deſtruction of the wicked; and his benign influence in cheriſhing and purifying his people, whom he inflames with the love of his perfections and glory, until in ſome meaſure they become like to him, and are changed into his image.—'Who 'can dwell with the devouring fire?' The exclamation expreſſes the extreme terror, and the awful ſenſe of the infinite majeſty and holineſs of Jehovah, which occupied the minds of thoſe who ſuffered the puniſhment of their crimes. Who is able to ſtand before this holy Lord God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? 'Thou art not a God that hath plea-'ſure in wickedneſs; neither ſhall evil dwell with 'thee: the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight; thou 'hateſt all workers of iniquity: thou ſhalt deſtroy 'them that ſpeak leaſing; the Lord will abhor the 'bloody and deceitful man *.' No objects can be ſo offenſive to the human ſenſes, as obſtinate tranſgreſſors are in the ſight of God; and when thoroughly convinced by experience of this affecting truth, they muſt be diſtreſſed beyond meaſure, as is here plainly intimated.—Surpriſe and dread of the direful preſages of endleſs deſpair and miſery, are ſtrongly marked in the following words.

Who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings? This language proceeds upon the ſuppoſition, that thoſe who uſed it were conſcious, that they juſtly deſerved to ſuffer thoſe terrible divine judgments, which in ſcripture are emphatically repreſented by fire. The word of God, not only exhibits the felicity and joy of the bleſſed, by objects the moſt deſirable and pleaſing; ſuch as a marriage feaſt, an everlaſting kingdom, and an incorruptible crown; but it alſo deſcribes,

* Pſal. v. 4, 5, 6.

deſcribes, by objects the moſt painful and horrible, the portion of the ſinner and the hypocrite; ſuch as the vengeance of eternal fire, the lake of fire and brimſtone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, and where there are weeping, wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth.—Who ſhall dwell, who can abide in theſe burnings, which are everlaſting without interruption, there being no intervals of eaſe or reſpite, no mitigation granted even by benevolence itſelf; without end, not the leaſt hope of eſcape or deliverance, at the expiration of the longeſt portion of time which human ability can calculate! What a dreadful aggravation muſt it be of the miſery of the wicked, that beſides the pungent ſenſe which they feel of preſent anguiſh, they have fully in their view the dreadful proſpect of its endleſs perpetuity, which cannot fail to increaſe beyond meaſure horror and deſpair.—Who ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings, where the forcible words of the royal poet ſhall be verified, 'The Almighty ſhall make them as a fiery oven in the time of his anger, the Lord ſhall ſwallow them up in his wrath, and the fire ſhall devour them *;' where the anguiſh of deſpair, the torment of incenſed wrath, the agony of keen remorſe, and the fury of impetuous deſires ſhall continually vex and diſtreſs them.—A prudent man foreſeeth the evil, and hideth himſelf; but the ſimple paſs on and are puniſhed. If you are indeed wiſe and prudent, you will ſolicitouſly look forward to the evils threatened againſt the ſinner and the hypocrite; and realizing their approaching miſery, you will have immediate recourſe to him who is a refuge from the moſt tremendous deſtruction; you will be armed againſt the aſſaults of temptation, and you will feel the moſt powerful incitements to adore the rich grace that diſpoſed you to flee from the wrath to come, and your infinite obligations to the Saviour, who plucked you as brands out of the burning.—If you are ſimple, ſecure, and inconſiderate about your future ſafety; be inſtructed that

* Pſal. xxi. 9.

that ſuch temper and conduct increaſes your danger, and after the warnings you have received, your miſery muſt be greatly augmented. If any argument can have influence to ſtop your progreſs in the career of iniquity, it is that ſuggeſted by the words we have been conſidering. The tender endearments of divine love, the amiable beauties of true holineſs, the glorious felicity of the redeemed from among men, are too refined and too ſublime to operate on ſenſual affections, and to make impreſſion on obdurate hearts. But if everlaſting burnings are ſeriouſly thought of and believed, they muſt ſound an alarm in your ears, and deter you from the ways of evil men, that lead to deſtruction.

15 He that walketh righteouſly, and ſpeaketh uprightly; he that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions, that ſhaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that ſtoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and ſhutteth his eyes from ſeeing evil;

In the vindication of the divine procedure, brought forward by our Prophet, he ſhews that God is not only terrible to the evil, but that he is amiable and good to the upright and the juſt. Though highly exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe, yet he demands homage and ſervice from men; and thoſe who are holy and righteous, he admits to intimate intercourſe with him, and the enjoyment of the moſt glorious privileges. The peculiar character, therefore, of thoſe who are honoured with theſe diſtinguiſhing prerogatives, and the eminent virtues of which they are poſſeſſed, are accurately delineated. In the following ſtrictures of the citizen of Zion, in whoſe heart are ſown the ſeeds of every virtue, there is an obvious alluſion to the ſeveral members of the human body, which by ungodly men, are yielded as ſervants of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, and which are employed by the ſervants of the Moſt High in the manner here ſpecified

ſpecified.—*He that walketh righteouſly*, or in righteouſneſſes, as the Hebrew word denotes. This is not merely an occaſional exerciſe, in which he engages in ſome extraordinary ſeaſons, but the daily practice in which he is aſſiduouſly employed at all times, in all places, and in every condition. His temper and conduct is ſignificantly expreſſed by a regular progreſſive continued courſe of righteous actions. Solicitous to render unto all their due; he gives unto God, the things that are God's; that reverence and love, that homage and confidence, that ſubmiſſion and obedience, which he juſtly demands: he gives unto men in their ſeveral capacities and ſtations, what belongs to them, according to the laws of equity and mercy. By works of righteouſneſs of every kind, he demonſtrates ſubjection to the divine authority, the rectitude of his diſpoſitions, his conformity to the example of God who loveth righteouſneſs, and his inviolable attachment to whatſoever things are juſt, honeſt, virtuous, and of good report.—The next mentioned trait in this character is,

He ſpeaketh uprightly, or as the word ſignifies, uprightneſſes. This amiable conduct is diametrically oppoſite to that deteſtable diſſimulation which is often practiſed by men of the world. There are not a few whom the prophet David thus deſcribes, 'the 'words of whoſe mouths are ſmoother than butter, 'but war is in their heart; whoſe words are ſofter 'than oil, yet are they drawn ſwords *.' There are ſome, of whom Solomon ſaith, 'they diſſemble with 'their lips, and lay up deceit within them; when they 'ſpeak, believe them not; for there are ſeven abomi-'nations in their hearts.' To ſuch deſingenuity, the perſon that ſhall dwell on high, forms a complete contraſt. Having received the truth in the love of it, that he may be ſaved, he ſpeaketh the truth in his heart; he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil unto his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour. Deteſting every ſpe-

* Pſal. lv.

cies of fraud and falacy, he is unbiaſſed by intereſt, affection, or prejudice; firmly attached to integrity and truth, he is fair and candid in all his words and actions. With ſimplicity and godly ſincerity he expreſſes his real ſentiments, and repreſents the ſubject of his diſcourſe with undiſſembled regard to truth and juſtice.

He deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions. He abhors the advantages that may be acquired by rigorous impoſitions, iniquitous exactions, and extravagant demands upon thoſe who are incapable of making reſiſtance, whoſe preſent circumſtances render them an eaſy prey to avarice and cruelty. Though ſome may imagine, that by means of ſtern authority and violence, they ſhall get much wealth and opulence; the perſon here deſcribed holds in deteſtation the advantages obtained by tyranny and injuſtice. In his heart he contemns the acquiſitions made by extortion and hardſhips impoſed on his fellow men, who are reluctantly obliged by force to ſubmit. In the words of David, 'he truſts not in oppreſſion, and becomes 'not vain in robbery: if riches increaſe, he ſets not 'his heart upon them *.'

That ſhaketh his hands from holding of bribes. As he does not defraud his fellow-citizens in his civil tranſactions; ſo if he acts in a judicial capacity, as a magiſtrate or judge, he diſcovers inflexible regard to equity and impartial juſtice. Bribes, compenſations for iniquitous practices, are offered and accepted, in order to alter or pervert the ſentiments of thoſe to whom is committed the diſtribution of judgment. This abominable practice is ſtrictly prohibited in the law of the Lord. Thus ſaith the ſupreme Legiſlator, 'Thou 'ſhalt take no gift; for the gift blindeth the wiſe, and 'perverteth the words of the righteous†.' If a bribe is preſſed upon him who walketh righteouſly, he rejects it with diſdain; and to expreſs his deteſtation of ſuch offers, and his inflexible integrity, he ſhakes his hands from holding them. Gifts of liberality, of acknowledgment,

* Pſal. lxii. 10. † Exod. xxiii. 8.

ledgment, of friendſhip, of charity, he will cheerfully give or receive; but donations intended to corrupt, or delay the diſtribution of that juſtice which God hath expreſsly commanded and exemplified, he refuſes with abhorrence.

That ſtoppeth his ears from hearing of blood. Blood may here ſignify thoſe ſanguinary crimes which are perpetrated through hatred or the love of filthy lucre; by the commiſſion whereof blood is ſhed, and the puniſhment of death is incurred. Some people are ſo exceedingly active in atrocious wickedneſs of this ſort, that to them may be applied the words of the inſpired prophet and apoſtle, 'their feet are ſwift to ſhed 'blood; in their ways are deſtruction and miſery *.' Such perſons frequently ſpeak of their cruel murderous exploits, whereby they diſcover the malignity of their diſpoſitions, they excite an inhuman, revengeful temper in others, that they wiſh would caſt in their lot among them. From this horrible wickedneſs, he that ſpeaketh uprightly diſcovers the utmoſt averſion. If at any time ſuch odious topics of converſation are introduced, he turns a deaf ear to the diſcourſe, which in his heart he deteſts. This part of the portrait is drawn by a maſterly hand †, 'They 'ſpeak miſchievous things, and imagine deceits all 'the day long: but I as a deaf man heard not, and 'as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth: thus 'I was as a man that heareth not,' &c.

And ſhutteth his eyes from ſeeing evil. The eyes and the ears are the avenues whereby thoſe objects approach the mind, that powerfully operate on the corrupt paſſions of mankind. Senſible of the dangers ariſing from theſe quarters, the upright man turns away his eyes from beholding ſin and vanity. Afraid of catching the contagion of evil, and deteſting every falſe and wicked way, he carefully avoids the temptations that might ſeduce him into tranſgreſſion. Leſt by viewing the vices of other people he might be induced to imitate them, or ſeem to feel any

* Rom. iii. 15, 16. † Pſal. xxxviii. 12, 13, 14.

any meaſure of ſatisfaction from them, he ſhuns unneceſſary intercourſe with the profane, and looks not on their ill conduct but with diſguſt and averſion. He entereth not into the path of the wicked; he goeth not in the way of evil men; he avoideth it; turneth from it, and paſſeth away.—Such, my brethren, is the excellent character and good conduct of the man, to whom the promiſes recorded in the following verſes ſhall be fulfilled. Diligently compare your character and conduct, with the unerring ſtandard now held up to view; and from impartial examination, you may learn if you have right to expect the enjoyment of the precious bleſſings which I proceed to unfold.

16 He ſhall dwell on high: his place of defence *ſhall be* the munitions of rocks: bread ſhall be given him; his waters *ſhall be* ſure.

In this and the verſes which immediately follow, the peculiar privileges are ſpecified, which ſhall be enjoyed by thoſe who poſſeſs the character above delineated.—In this preſent life, he ſhall be elevated from a low depreſſed condition, to a high and eminent ſtation, wherein he ſhall inherit the moſt honourable prerogatives; adoption into God's family; delightful intercourſe with him; the protection of his providence; with every thing requiſite to dignify and felicitate the man, on whom God is pleaſed to confer the marks of his favour. In the heavenly world he ſhall be exalted to the immediate preſence of the Moſt High God, where he ſhall enjoy the moſt ſublime happineſs, with glory, honour, and immortality. There he ſhall have his fixed, perpetual reſidence in perfect tranquillity and ſecurity, free from all moleſtation and danger, ſitting together with Jeſus Chriſt in heavenly places. Wicked men are ſometimes raiſed up on high, and advanced to ſtations of eminence, from whence they are in a moment brought into deſolation; whereas he that walketh righteouſly,

ly, having reached the higheſt pinnacle of honour, ſhall never be degraded; but ſhall abide for ever with his Saviour and Lord, at the right hand of the majeſty on high.

His place of defence ſhall be the munitions of rocks. Some people attain to diſtinguiſhed dignity, who are unable to preſerve themſelves in poſſeſſion of the high ſtation, from which they are unexpectedly and ſuddenly precipitated. It is not ſo with him that ſpeaketh uprightly, who is exalted, not only to a lofty, but to a ſecure ſituation. The defence with which he is encompaſſed is ſtrong and impregnable; on which finite power cannot make any impreſſion. Of all places of ſtrength and ſafety, thoſe are the moſt ſecure and invincible, which the powers of nature and art have combined to fortify. Large rocks advantageouſly ſituated, regularly connected, and well ſecured, are juſtly reckoned to form the ſtrongeſt fortreſſes, to which perſons can betake themſelves for ſafety. They bid defiance to the moſt terrible ſtorms; the moſt furious aſſaults of enemies cannot make impreſſion upon them; much leſs overthrow them. In reference therefore to the ſhelter they afford, the omnipotent protection of Jehovah is promiſed to the upright, who are ſurrounded by thoſe immoveable bulwarks, which created power cannot deſtroy, nor the ſtrongeſt engines overturn. They are kept to the incorruptible inheritance reſerved in heaven for them, by the mighty power of God through faith unto ſalvation.

Bread ſhall given him; his waters ſhall be ſure. Bread and water ſometimes denote all the proviſion that is neceſſary to ſupport this preſent life; at other times they ſignify thoſe ſpiritual comforts, which are requiſite to maintain and cheriſh the ſpiritual life poſſeſſed by the upright among men. The promiſe before us may be conſidered as comprehending both ſenſes, and the import of it may be thus ſtated. The Giver of all good ſhall grant to him that walketh righteouſly, all the food and raiment that are neceſſa-

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ry to ſupport his natural life, whilſt God hath any ſervice for him to perform on earth. Though he may not enjoy the plenty and variety of the good things of this world, with which ſome are favoured; he ſhall have all that infinite wiſdom ſees proper for his ſuſtenance and comfort. He ſhall alſo give him the bread and water of life, to nouriſh and ſuſtain, to refreſh and ſolace the divine life of which he is made partaker; in conſequence whereof it ſhall be preſerved and invigorated. Whatever obſtructions may ſeem to lie in the way of the accompliſhment of this declaration, they ſhall either be removed or ſurmounted. Whatever may be precarious, this ſhall be certain, and may be depended upon, that he whoſe character is above deſcribed, ſhall be bleſſed with neceſſary temporal and ſpiritual proviſion. In this preſent ſtate, as far as conſiſtent with the viciſſitudes, the temptations, and troubles connected with it, he ſhall receive in anſwer to his prayers, the accompliſhment of this faithful promiſe. And in the celeſtial world, where that which is perfect ſhall come, he ſhall enjoy its full completion, to his everlaſting conſolation and joy.—If you enquire to what period the prophecy recorded in the preceding verſes refers, and when it received its fulfilment? I anſwer, that it was remarkably verified in the times of the Maccabees, when Jehovah diſplayed his righteouſneſs, by ſtriking terror into the enemies of his people, and conſuming them in wrath; whilſt his ſervants were exalted to honour, to ſafety, and plenty. Then he honoured them, with thoſe aſtoniſhing victories and triumphs over their potent adverſaries, the renown of which hath reached the moſt diſtant countries, and the moſt remote ages. This primary accompliſhment ought to encourage the church of God to expect the farther fulfilment of theſe predictions, until they receive their full completion in the overthrow of the wicked, and the final ſalvation of the righteous.

17 Thine eyes ſhall ſee the king in his beauty;

ty: they ſhall behold the land that is very far off.

Having exhibited his defence of the rectitude of the divine procedure, our Prophet goes on, according to his uſual practice, to narrate in beautiful figurative language, ſome of the peculiar prerogatives to be enjoyed by the church after their deliverance.—The Lord God, I ſuppoſe, is the king of whom it is promiſed, that the eyes of the upright ſhall behold, in whom the church is introduced triumphing, at the 22d verſe, 'The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our 'law-giver, the Lord is our king; he will ſave us.' He is a great God, and a great King, above all gods; the King eternal, immortal, and inviſible; the bleſſed and only Potentate, who gives the moſt illuſtrious diſplays of majeſty and grandeur. Earthly monarchs are ſhort lived; and death ſoon obliges them to reſign their ſovereign authority. He is an everlaſting King, whoſe dominion is throughout all generations. They rely on their ſubjects for the ſupport of their royal dignity. He depends not upon the creatures he hath made, for the glory, honour, and power, which he unchangeably poſſeſſes. They require wiſe counſellors, to adviſe them in the adminiſtration of government. Wiſdom and counſel are his, of whom it is written, Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counſellor? They may be deficient in ability to execute the purpoſes they have formed. By his omnipotence he rules in the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth; being able to ſubdue all things to himſelf. They are little acquainted with what paſſes in ſocieties throughout their kingdoms. He perfectly knows the affection and obedience, the diſaffection and diſloyalty of every individual through the wide extent of his empire. They are dreſſed in coſtly and ſplendid apparel, and decked with ornaments. He is clothed with garments of ſalvation, and the robe of righteouſneſs, and is clad with zeal as with a cloke.

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Their thrones, their ſceptres, and their crowns, are made of periſhing materials, which ere long decay and are loſt. His throne eſtabliſhed in the heavens is for ever, his ſceptre is of righteouſneſs, and he is crowned with glory and honour. Their attendants are a few frail dying creatures, diſtinguiſhed from thoſe around them by ſome external badges of honour. Ten thouſand times ten thouſand, multitudes which no man can number, of angels and ſaints, encompaſs his celeſtial throne, and execute his pleaſure. Their treaſures are ſoon ſpent, and their jewels are tarniſhed or loſt through length of time. His treaſures are inexhauſtible; and not one of his ſaints, who are his jewels, ſhall ever be loſt or grow dim with age; but in the kingdom of their Father they ſhall ſhine as the ſun in the firmament. Their empires are bounded by territories belonging to other ſtates, to which their authority cannot reach. His dominion is from ſea to ſea; his kingdom ruleth over all: all his creatures act under him, even the moſt exalted are accountable to him for the government with which they are entruſted. What a high privilege, then, to behold this glorious Prince

In his beauty! The beauty that is admired among the human kind, conſiſts in elegant features, in a fine complexion, in which the loveliеſt colours are ſweetly blended, in a becoming proportion of parts handſomely adjuſted, that are all complete, none of them deficient or redundant, none of them artificial, but every one neat, natural, and genuine. Though, properly ſpeaking, beauty is a relative term that belongs to perſons and things material, it is aſcribed to God who is a ſpirit, in a ſenſe, ſomewhat different from that in which it is attributed to any of the human ſpecies. The bleſſed God, who infinitely poſſeſſes every amiable excellency, and from whom proceeds all that is lovely in the univerſe, muſt himſelf be adorned with the moſt exquiſite beauty. The ſplendor of the celeſtial orbs, the variety of the flowers, and fruits of the field; the attractive comelineſs conſpicuous

cuous in ſome of the human race, is formed by his benevolent hand; in whom is concentered the ſweeteſt aſſemblage of every divine perfection. In him, they all ſhine forth with the brighteſt luſtre, without any ſuperfluity or deficiency. He is conſummately righteous, yet full of compaſſion; he is perfectly holy, yet rich in mercy; he is ſupreme in majeſty, yet infinitely gracious; wiſdom, power, and faithfulneſs, with every glorious attribute that can excite admiration and love, are united in the ſupreme Lord of heaven and earth. In the various important characters he ſuſtains, he acts with the moſt endearing condeſcenſion and approved fidelity, aſſiduouſly performing every office and duty that love can dictate. With what conſummate wiſdom doth he inſtruct his children; with what exquiſite ſkill doth he heal their diſtempers; with what invincible power doth he protect them; with what inſuperable ardour and patience doth he accompliſh their redemption; and with what tender compaſſion doth he continue to feed his flock! Here then is unſullied beauty in perſon and character moſt happily conjoined; which, properly contemplated by the enlightened mind, captivates the heart, and affords the higheſt gratification of which human nature is capable in its moſt exalted ſtate.—This glorious King, the upright ſhall behold, when he appears in awful majeſty, diſplaying his righteouſneſs, power, and grace, in the preſervation of his church, and the execution of terrible vengeance upon their enemies. They ſhall ſee his power and glory in the ſanctuary; becauſe his loving kindneſs is better than life, their lips ſhall praiſe him; and hereafter they ſhall ſee his face in righteouſneſs, and ſhall be ſatisfied with his likeneſs.—Let us unite in requeſt with the patriarch and prophet David, expreſſed in theſe words, Pſal. xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I deſired of 'the Lord, that will I ſeek after; that I may dwell in 'the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life, to be-'hold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his 'temple.' Then ſhall we have reaſon to exclaim in

the words of the prophet Zechariah, 'How great is 'his goodneſs, how great is his beauty *!' and to adopt the words of the queen of Shebah to king Solomon, 'Behold the one half was not told me; thy 'wiſdom and glory exceedeth the fame that I heard '—happy are theſe thy ſervants that ſtand continu-'ally before thee †.'

They ſhall behold the land that is very far off. As a happy conſequence of the ſubſtantial victories which the Jews were to obtain over their adverſaries, when Jehovah eminently appeared for their defence, the upright among them, who lived at the time Iſaiah had in view, were to ſee their territories extended to very remote places of the country, formerly occupied by their enemies the Philiſtines, the Moabites, and the Syrians. Though this ſeems to be the literal import of the words, which ought not to be overlooked, yet their ſpiritual meaning chiefly demands our attention. The Hebrew word rendered *very far off*, may denote either the great extent, or the vaſt diſtance of the land that is here intended from the place wherein our Prophet exerciſed his miniſtry. The land of Canaan, which God gave to the poſterity of Iſrael for an inheritance, afforded a ſignificant emblem of the land of uprightneſs, into which by his good Spirit, he conducts all his true Iſrael, after having delivered them from the bondage of corruption, and led them through the wilderneſs of this world. This heavenly and better country, juſtly merits the deſcription here given. It is exceedingly extenſive, if we form our opinion by the number of its inhabitants; it is tranſcendantly beautiful, being enriched by the pure river of the water of life; bleſſed with the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits; and adorned with the holy city, the new Jeruſalem; none of whoſe citizens ſhall ever ſay, I am ſick. There is alſo the throne of God and the Lamb, where his ſervants ſhall ſerve him, and they ſhall ſee his face.—This land is alſo very far off, ſituated at an immenſe diſtance from this earth; men know but little of its con-

* Zech. ix. 17. † 1 Kings x. 7. *et ſeq.*

conſummate excellence and glory; few maintain intimate regular correſpondence with its glorious inhabitants, though they are themſelves profeſſedly travelling thither.—This diſtant land, the eyes of the righteous ſhall behold. Moſes having gone up by divine command to the top of Piſgah, the Lord ſhewed him the land which the tribes of Iſrael were to inherit, and cauſed him to ſee it with his eyes. In like manner, the faithful ſervants of God ſhall believingly contemplate the heavenly country, of which Canaan was a ſhadow and type, to the full enjoyment whereof they ſhall in due time be admitted.—With this pleaſant proſpect fully in our view, let us diligently improve the advantages we poſſeſs, for aſſiſting our faith, and animating our endeavours in preſſing after thoſe things which are above. And let us earneſtly pray for the illumination of our minds, that we may become better acquainted with the riches of the glory of the inheritance in the ſaints.—At the memorable period wherein Jehovah went forth to fight with the nations that came to battle againſt Jeruſalem, he was ſeen in his glory and majeſty, as the Lord of hoſts, working wonderful deliverance for his peculiar people, who beheld their territories greatly extended, and their poſſeſſions ſpread far and wide *. And as the temporal benefits conferred upon the church of old, repreſented the ſpiritual bleſſings enjoyed by the ſubjects of Miſſiah; this prediction hath its more full accompliſhment, by their beholding the glory of God ſhining in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, the limits of his kingdom enlarged, and by their looking forward to the completion of their felicity in the Zion that is above.

18 Thine heart ſhall meditate terror: Where *is* the ſcribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers?

Pleaſant ſenſations ariſing from the enjoyment of what

* See 1 Mac. xiv. 6.

what is agreeable, are much increaſed by the recollection of paſt diſquietudes and troubles. Every one of the upright ſervants of God, according to this prediction, was attentively to call to remembrance the awful diſplays which the Almighty had given of his power, righteouſneſs, and mercy, in the overthrow of their enemies, contrary to all human expectation. Each of them would ſeriouſly conſider, with ſurpriſe and gratitude, the terrible judgments of God, whereby the church was extricated from the forlorn calamitous ſtate, to which they had been reduced by their formidable adverſaries; even when the moſt intelligent ſubtle reaſoners concluded their ruin to be inevitable. Reflecting on this ſubject, the man of God was to exclaim with vehemence, Where is the ſcribe, the learned doctor? renowned for wiſdom and erudition, who is acquainted with the law and the prophets, whoſe buſineſs is to teach in the ſynagogue, to decide in the ſanhedrin, and to communicate inſtruction both to church and ſtate.—Where is the receiver or weigher? as the Hebrew word is tranſlated in the margin of ſome bibles, who is employed in deliberating, conſulting, and determining matters requiring nice diſcuſſion, whether of leſs moment, or greater importance, reſpecting the providence and the law of God.—Where is he that counted the towers, who was engaged in reckoning the citadels and fortreſſes which were poſſeſſed by his countrymen, deemed of conſiderable conſequence; or in numbering and arranging the arguments whereby the prevailing opinion reſpecting the preſent ſituation of the kingdom were ſupported and defended? Where are the perſons of theſe deſcriptions, whoſe ſentiments in relation to the church now appear to have been ill founded.

To the words before us, the Apoſtle Paul alludes, 1 Cor. i. 20. when ſhewing that men of the greateſt abilities, and moſt extenſive learning, cannot by their natural ſagacity comprehend the ſublime doctrines of the goſpel, and therefore reject them with contempt.

tempt. Where (ſaith he) is the wiſe? where is the ſcribe? where is the diſputer of this world? Where are theſe men, they are not employed in the miniſtry of the goſpel, which is the power of God unto ſalvation. What better have people become in principle and practice by their inſtructions? Where are the ſtrong arguments they have adduced againſt the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt? Are they not all vain ſophiſms, which diſcover egregious folly and inveterate prejudices? Their falſe maxims have been rejected, and their plauſible objections anſwered. Hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world, both by his providence and his word?—Let us often call to mind thoſe terrible things in righteouſneſs, which the God of ſalvation hath done in anſwer to the prayers of his people, that thereby our faith may be confirmed, our fears diſpelled, and our hope in the divine power and mercy eſtabliſhed.

19 Thou ſhalt not ſee a fierce people, a people of a deeper ſpeech than thou canſt perceive; of a ſtammering tongue, *that thou canſt* not underſtand.

Another benefit to be enjoyed by the church of God after their deliverance from thraldom, is ſpecified in theſe words.—They were not to be diſturbed or diſtreſſed by the ſight of a ferocious foreign foe, that is particularly deſcribed. The enemy intended, is characteriſed as a fierce, bold, and valiant people; ſuch as are apt to ſtrike with terror thoſe againſt whom they act with hoſtility, whom they threaten to invade.—*A people of deeper ſpeech than thou canſt perceive*, whoſe language is hard to pronounce, and whoſe meaning is difficult to be apprehended. *Of a ſtammering tongue*, &c. that ſeems ridiculous and unintelligible to thoſe who are unacquainted with it. The church, under both the Old and New Teſtament, having always had intercourſe with the nations of the earth, who ſpeak various languages, and who at different

periods

periods have ſhewn themſelves inimical to the people of God, the prediction muſt be underſtood with ſome reſtrictions, and its import may be thus expreſſed: Thou ſhalt not behold with terror thy powerful adverſaries; thou ſhalt not be greatly hurt by them, nor ſubjected to their tyrannical authority. Viewing the prophecy in reference to the temporal ſtate of the Jews, it can refer only to a certain period, not to the nations in general, by ſome of whom they were ſucceſſively oppreſſed; but to ſome particular kingdom, which our Prophet had in his eye, probably the Syrian Macedonians, who uſed the Greek dialect, to whom this deſcription might be applied by the Jews. Being reſcued from the Syrian yoke, they continued to enjoy liberty and tranquillity for a conſiderable period. Under the œconomy of grace, in which ſpiritual privileges ſupply the place of temporal benefits, this prediction hath alſo had its accompliſhment. In the beginning of the goſpel, many virulent perſecutors having laid aſide their enmity to the church of Jeſus Chriſt, and abandoned the ridiculous language whereby they abuſed the diſciples of the Son of God; they learned to ſpeak the praiſes of thoſe whom they had maligned and injured.

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our ſolemnities: thine eyes ſhall ſee Jeruſalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that* ſhall not be taken down; not one of the ſtakes thereof ſhall ever be removed, neither ſhall any of the cords thereof be broken.

The ſecurity and perpetuity of the church is here foretold, and beautifully illuſtrated under a very pleaſing figure. Iſaiah, perſonating the miniſters of the Lord, whoſe employment ſhould be, to comfort his people, calls upon them to turn their attention to Zion, and to contemplate the ſtability of Jeruſalem, where the Jewiſh ſolemn feſtivals were celebrated. The ſubject of this prediction is, I ſuppoſe, the

the ſame to which the whole prophecy in this chapter relates; *viz.* the ſtate of the church about the time of the Maccabees; which is ſo expreſſed, that it properly delineates the ſtate and privileges of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. The earthly Jeruſalem, particularly at the time to which our Prophet here refers, was the object of God's peculiar care and divine protection; but that city having been deſtroyed, and that diſpenſation terminated with which it was eſſentially connected, the Jeruſalem that was on earth is now abſorbed in the new ſpiritual Jeruſalem. The comfortable ſtate to which the former was advanced in the period alluded to, in part fulfilled the prediction that is conſummated and more clearly exhibited in the condition of the latter. The earthly Jeruſalem, though burnt by the Chaldeans, and profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes, was not removed, but continued poſſeſſing ſome meaſure of tranquillity, until the foundation of the New Jeruſalem was laid, after which it was razed to the ground. Theſe remarks may aſſiſt in underſtanding this prediction, which is attended with ſome difficulties.

Zion with propriety and elegance is ſaid to be the city of our ſolemnities. Whilſt the Moſaic diſpenſation continued in force, it was the place whither the tribes of the Lord went up to the teſtimony of Iſrael, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; and to celebrate thoſe ſolemn feſtivals which they were required to obſerve. Look upon Zion with admiration and pleaſure; obſerve that after all the perils to which ſhe hath been expoſed, and the calamities ſhe hath ſuffered, ſhe ſtill exiſts, defended by divine Providence; her appearance is renewed, and ſtill ſhe flouriſhes. Attentively ſurvey with the eyes of your mind this highly favoured city, as an eminent type of the city of God, founded and eſtabliſhed by Meſſiah the Prince, to which not only all the tribes of Iſrael have recourſe, but to which people of every kindred that belong to the true Iſrael of God diſperſed over all the earth, reſort with pleaſure

ſure and joy. Zion did anciently encompaſs the magnificent and beautiful temple that was conſecrated to the worſhip of God, wherein it was daily celebrated according to divine inſtitution. It muſt have exhibited a moſt delightful object of contemplation. On religious accounts it was frequented by vaſt multitudes of people, who, aſcending continually to this habitation of the Moſt High, repreſented the vaſt concourſe of Iſraelites indeed, who aſcend to the Zion that is above. This Zion, this Jeruſalem, was a ſignificant emblem of the true ſpiritual city of our God, which is ſtill more worthy of admiring attention, being indeed the moſt beautiful object on earth to which we can poſſibly turn our thoughts. This is the city of our ſolemnities, wherein the people of God unite, in paying their homage to their great Creator and Redeemer, wherein they enjoy his preſence, and receive the pledges of his love.—Aſſurance is given,

Thine eyes ſhall ſee Jeruſalem a quiet habitation. The literal Jeruſalem, at the time referred to, was to enjoy external tranquillity, freedom from diſturbance and the aſſaults of enemies. The ſpiritual Jeruſalem, whereof it was an eminent type, ſhall be bleſſed with peace and proſperity, amid the troubles and contentions of this world; the ſpirit of love and peace ſhall preſide over her citizens, ſo as to aboliſh enmity, to diſpel diſcords, and preſerve from violence. Thus ſhall ſhe become a lively image of the celeſtial city, wherein they that love one another, will with one heart and one voice aſcribe ſalvation, glory, and honour, to God and to the Lamb.—It is likewiſe foretold, Thine eyes ſhall ſee Jeruſalem 'a tabernacle 'that ſhall not be taken down.' The expreſſion denotes, that ſhe ſhall not ſuffer any violent change, or be transferred by force from one place to another. The metaphor is taken from the tents erected by wandering tribes in the deſarts of Arabia, where travellers are expoſed to ſtorms and tempeſts, deſtitute of any houſe or place of ſhelter. Theſe tents or tabernacles,

bernacles, when not properly fixed, if aſſaulted by a violent wind, are ſometimes laid flat on the ground, and broken to pieces. Jeruſalem ſhall not be liable to any ſuch diſaſter; ſhe ſhall not be overthrown by any ſtorm, but remain firm and unmoved. The Jewiſh and afterward the Chriſtian church, like a capacious, highly ornamented, and well ſecured tabernacle, contains the large family of God with their miniſters. Like a moveable habitation, which is transferred from one place, and from one people to another, the church may be removed from one nation to another, yet it ſhall never be overthrown; its foundation reſting upon the holy mountains, poſſeſſes the moſt permanent ſtability.—It is added,

Not one of the ſtakes thereof ſhall ever be removed. The ſtakes which ſerve to keep the tent firm, may denote the gracious promiſes of God, ſupported by the divine power and veracity, whereby the church is eſtabliſhed and preſerved in ſafety. The cords may ſignify the graces of faith, truſt, and hope; by means of which the church becomes united to the promiſes of Jehovah, and ſo grounded and ſettled, as not to be moved by the ſtorms whereby they are aſſailed. Thus connected with the omnipotence and faithfulneſs of Jehovah, they become invincible, like the houſe that a wiſe man built on a rock, upon which the rain deſcended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe, but it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock *. By the prediction we are conſidering, the moſt explicit aſſurance is given, that the connection here mentioned ſhall never be diſſolved, neither ſtakes ſhall be moved nor cords broken.—Theſe words which were in ſome meaſure accompliſhed about the time of the Maccabees, are amply verified with reſpect to the New Jeruſalem, founded by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles. Like a tabernacle ſet up in the deſart that is not injured by

* Matth. vii. 24, 25.

the ſtorm, the city of Zion erected in the wilderneſs of this world, after ſuſtaining the violent tempeſts that have beat upon it, continues firmly eſtabliſhed. In truth it is a kingdom that cannot be moved, againſt which the combined efforts of infernal powers, of death, and the grave, ſhall never be able to prevail. The citizens thereof who truſt in the Lord, and flouriſh like the graſs, ſhall be like literal mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Comfortable thought! The Higheſt himſelf ſhall eſtabliſh the church, the true ſpiritual Zion! Other cities have mouldered away, or been razed to their foundations; but the city of God, which is his own building, and wherein he hath his reſidence, ſhall never be overthrown, but ſhall endure throughout all ages.

21 But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* ſtreams; wherein ſhall go no galley with oars, neither ſhall gallant ſhip paſs thereby.

The felicity and ſafety of the people of God, is here deſcribed under another beautiful emblem, which requires to be carefully examined. The church is exhibited as a city, that is pleaſantly ſituated beſide ſome large rivers and fine ſtreams, into which no large ſhip of war ſhall enter with hoſtile intention, to alarm or annoy its inhabitants. Their proſperous ſtate ſhall not only be firmly eſtabliſhed, but they ſhall rejoice in their happineſs and privileges, as entirely depending upon God, the ſupreme Governor of the world. The expreſſion ſeems to allude to the land of Egypt, which was every where interſected, watered, and rendered fertile by the rivers and canals wherewith it abounded, that made it to reſemble the garden of the Lord. Perhaps it may have reference alſo to the city Memphis in that kingdom, which was encompaſſed by the waters of the Nile.—The firſt clauſe of the verſe may be thus tranſlated: *Yea rather the Lord will be glorious unto us.* He will moſt illuſtri-

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ouſly manifeſt his glory in communicating defence to his people, to whom he will afford ſuch agreeable protection, as broad impaſſable rivers yield to the populous cities that ſtand on their banks. Nor is this all; he will render their ſituation delightful and comfortable, like thoſe fertile places which are watered by rivers and ſtreams; by means of which they poſſeſs many conveniences, and have all kinds of the beſt proviſions conveyed to them. The ſimilitude plainly intimates, that the people of God were to aſſume a pleaſant, plentiful appearance; that they were actually to poſſeſs abundance of deſirable good things, with many agreeable advantages; and to enjoy opportunities of maintaining intercourſe with the heavenly and better country, where is fulneſs of joys and rivers of pleaſures for evermore. *Wherein ſhall go no galley*, &c. Broad rivers open a convenient paſſage for ſhips of war to enter, with a view to moleſt and aſſault the cities that ſtand on their banks. On this account, their inhabitants are more expoſed to the encroachments and invaſions of enemies, than thoſe who dwell in the inland parts of the country. To obviate this circumſtance, which might give occaſion to uneaſineſs and ſolicitude, our Prophet declares, that in the broad rivers of which he ſpeaks, ſhall go no armed rowing veſſel. No ſhip of war, with hoſtile intention, ſhall frequent theſe rivers to haraſs the Zion which they ſerve to beautify. Jehovah being their fortreſs will preſerve her inhabitants from the inſults of their enemies.—The citizens of the New Jeruſalem are hereby aſſured, that they ſhall poſſeſs the ſpiritual privileges wherewith they are favoured, free from many of the diſadvantages to which they may be ſuppoſed to be liable. Nothing can poſſibly do any eſſential injury to thoſe, about whom the providence of God is employed for good. Worldly prerogatives expoſe to many dangers, and ſometimes prove ruinous to their poſſeſſors; whereas the privileges which God confers upon his ſervants, have no ſuch tendency, nor ſhall their enemies be permit-

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ted by means of them effectually to hurt their beſt intereſts. Though ſometimes moleſted by their foes, they are guarded by ſtronger bulwarks than human ſkill and induſtry can raiſe for their defence. There is a power above, far ſuperior to that of their adverſaries, which never fails to be exerted for their protection, from thence they derive ſafety and comfort. Thither let us have recourſe on every emergency; then may we hope that God will grant us the ſhield of his ſalvation.

22 For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver, the LORD *is* our king; he will ſave us.

Iſaiah in name of the church exults in the intimate relations, in which they ſtand connected with Jehovah, from whom proceeds all the felicity they enjoy. —*The Lord is our judge.* The all-ſufficient, omnipotent Jehovah, who is merciful and gracious, is our judge, who inſtructs us with authority in the knowledge of his perfect law, who cauſes us to underſtand his precepts, and who ſhall impartially determine our eternal ſtate. He is the righteous judge of all the earth, who is perfectly acquainted with the character and conduct, and takes cognizance of the actions of every individual, and who ſhall render to every man according to his works. He accurately diſcriminates our characters, though to human view involved in much obſcurity and uncertainty. He is our judge to whom we appeal for juſtice when injured and oppreſſed, in whoſe equitable procedure and deciſions, we cordially acquieſce; and by whoſe final ſentence, we truſt that we ſhall be acquitted and applauded—*The Lord is our lawgiver*, who poſſeſſes ſupreme unlimited power of enacting laws for the government of the univerſe. The right of legiſlation among men is derived from their predeceſſors in office, from the conſent of the people;

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it is acquired by conqueſt, or ſome other way. Whereas the power of Jehovah to give laws, ariſes from his own glorious ſovereignty and underived univerſal dominion. Their authority may be called in queſtion, it may be controlled, and it muſt be limited, to the narrow bounds of the empire ſubject to their authority. Jehovah gives laws to the whole creation, to the heavens, the earth, and the ſeas; and for his peculiar people he hath enacted ſtatutes, which are holy, juſt, and good; in the keeping of which, there is a great reward. Human laws extend only to the words and actions of men, to their external conduct, their temporal concerns, and ſocial intercourſe. The law of the Lord reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, to the conſcience, to mens ſpiritual and eternal intereſts; being admirably adapted to promote their preſent and future felicity.—*The Lord is our king*. He is indeed King over all the earth, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, whoſe kingdom ruleth over all. He rules even in the midſt of his enemies; he infatuates their counſels; he reſtrains their turbulent paſſions; he baffles their wicked enterpriſes, and ſtills the tumults of the people. In a peculiar manner doth he reign over his holy hill of Zion; where, by his mighty power, he ſubdues to himſelf a numerous willing people, who cheerfully conſecrate and reſign themſelves to his government. On them he liberally confers whatever is conducive to their happineſs and comfort; whilſt he defends them from the malicious deſigns, and powerful machinations of their adverſaries, whom he will not allow to tyranniſe over them, and to deprive them of their moſt valuable prerogatives. Well therefore may the church triumph in being connected with Jehovah in theſe important relations, and from thence deduce with pleaſure this joyful inference—*He will ſave us*. In time paſt, by his omnipotent arm, he hath wrought for us many glorious deliverances; he reſcued us from bondage in Egypt; from captivity and oppreſſion; from treachery

chery and perſecution; and we truſt that he will hereafter grant us all thoſe temporal ſalvations which he ſees that we need from time to time. We hope alſo that he will crown us with ſpiritual and eternal ſalvation; give us complete victory over all our enemies, and that we ſhall triumph in his praiſe.

After the victories obtained by means of the Maccabees, the people of God would rejoice with peculiar pleaſure in their intimate connection with Jehovah, who wonderfully interpoſed in their behalf. Under the New Teſtament, the ſeveral relations ſubſiſting between the Moſt High and his church, being more fully eſtabliſhed, and more clearly demonſtrated, they have ſtill more ample ground to glory in the Lord, and to hope for his ſalvation. Let our confidence then be placed on God who ſaveth the upright in heart, and ſuch as be of a contrite ſpirit.

23 Thy tacklings are looſed; they could not well ſtrengthen their maſt; they could not ſpread the ſail; then is the prey of a great ſpoil divided: the lame take the prey.

In theſe words, addreſſed to the enemies of the church, their weak confuſed ſtate is repreſented, as forming a contraſt to the flouriſhing condition of the ſervants of God. Having deſcribed the felicity of the church, under the beautiful emblem of a fertile country, watered by pleaſant ſtreams, and rendered convenient for commerce by large rivers; our Prophet proceeds to exhibit the broken enfeebled ſtate of their adverſaries, by the ſimilitude of a veſſel in diſtreſs, that hath been diſabled in her tackle, maſts, and ſails.—The tacklings may denote the good counſels of wiſe ſenators, a ſtrong well diſciplined army, and money, which is neceſſary to ſupply the exigences of the ſtate. Theſe tacklings are looſed, when few prudent men can be found to manage public affairs, and to form the manners of the citizens; when the ſoldiery become weak and timid, and there is a

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ſcarcity of finances, to carry into execution the ſalutary meaſures that are requiſite to be adopted.—*They could not well ſtrengthen their maſt.* The maſt of the ſhip may ſignify the moſt eminent perſon or perſons in the kingdom, who were exalted above all the others; the king or ſupreme governors, who occupy the moſt conſpicuous ſtations, and poſſeſs the greateſt influence. The maſt, in this figurative ſenſe, could not be well ſtrengthened; when the proper means of aiding and ſupporting the chief magiſtrate were wanting, or were greatly deficient, he could not receive the ſuccours that were requiſite to maintain the dignity and proſperity of the empire. Perſons in power, elevated to the higheſt offices, are incapable, by themſelves, to advance the public welfare, unleſs ſupported by the wealth, the intereſt, the advice and courage of thoſe over whom they preſide. Deſtitute of ſuch aſſiſtance they could not—*Spread the ſail.* The ſail may denote the means that were neceſſary to be applied, and vigorouſly extended without delay, in order to promote the purpoſes to which they ought to be ſubſervient, for the benefit of the ſtate. Theſe the people employed in managing public affairs, were unable immediately to uſe, ſo as to give effect to the meaſures whereby the common intereſt might have been forwarded. They could not advance the ſubſidies neceſſary for carrying on war; they could not form alliances that were profitable with neighbouring nations; they could not enter into ſucceſsful negociations; nor were they able to complete thoſe public works, which might have proved uſeful and ornamental to the kingdom—The conſequences were

Then is the prey of a great ſpoil divided, &c. The adverſe power whoſe ſituation reſembled a ſhip in diſtreſs, is ſuppoſed to have met with a terrible ſtorm, whereby ſhe had been dreadfully ſhattered, her cables and ropes looſed or broken, her maſts diſabled, ſo that ſhe was almoſt a wreck. When in this forlorn condition, deſerted by the mariners, who had loſt

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hopes of her being able to ſtand out the tempeſt, the valuable cargo wherewith ſhe was laden, becomes a prey to the fraudulent and rapacious. In like manner, the ſtate or kingdom, inimical to the people of God, intended by this figurative deſcription, having been reduced to great perplexity and diſtreſs, was to fall a prey to neighbouring nations, who were to divide among them all their pillage which they could gather. So eaſy was the prey to be obtained, and ſo abundant were to be the ſpoils, that even the maimed and the feeble, were without fear or difficulty, to lay hold of them.—From hence we learn, what ſhall be the deplorable condition of thoſe who injure the ſervants of the Moſt High; inſtead of accompliſhing their hoſtile deſigns, they themſelves ſhall become a prey to thoſe whom they are unable to reſiſt, whilſt the church under the protection of Jehovah ſhall ſubſiſt and proſper.

24 And the inhabitants ſhall not ſay, I am ſick: the people that dwell therein *ſhall be* forgiven *their* iniquity.

Iſaiah concludes his deſcription of the felicity of Jeruſalem with a ſolemn aſſurance, that the citizens at the period to which he refers, ſhould not have ground to complain of the prevalence of any mortal diſtemper. It is evident from obſervation and hiſtory, that he does not mean to affirm, that they ſhould be totally exempted from all manner of bodily diſeaſe or ſickneſs, from ſome meaſure of which, none are excluded in this preſent world, in which men are born to trouble as the ſparks fly upward. He ſeems to have had primarily in view, the languor, uneaſineſs, and diſtreſs that good men feel, on account of public calamities, the notorious ſins and ſcandals, of thoſe who profeſs to belong to the church of God. According to this interpretation, our Prophet declares, that the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, at the time to which he alludes, being delivered from abounding

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tranſgreſſion, from the effects of the divine diſpleaſure, and conſequently from the cauſes of public ſorrow and complaint, they were to rejoice in the firm perſuaſion of the divine favour and forgiveneſs.—The words however admit of a higher and more important ſenſe. As the bodies, ſo the ſouls of men are liable to various diſtempers, which greatly enfeeble and afflict them. In reference to theſe ſpiritual diſorders, the prediction plainly intimates, that the citizens of the New Jeruſalem ſhall not have reaſon to complain of any dangerous indiſpoſition of this ſort, ariſing from conſciouſneſs of unpardoned guilt, or indiſpoſition for the exerciſes of the divine life. Not one of its regenerated inhabitants ſhall have cauſe to ſay, I am ſick; ſo weak through ſpiritual diſtempers, that I am incapable of uſing the means of promoting the ſpiritual life; ſo diſtreſſed with perplexing fears, that I feel myſelf unable to perform the work that God hath aſſigned to me. Having their powers renovated and invigorated, and being reſtored to a ſound and active ſtate, they ſhall not have reaſon to complain of languor and liſtleſſneſs, 'God ſhall 'wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there ſhall 'be no more death, neither ſorrow nor crying, neither 'ſhall there be any more pain; for the former things 'are paſſed away *.'

The people that dwell therein, &c. To the promiſe of ſpiritual health and proſperity, contained in the former part of this verſe, is ſubjoined the reviving aſſurance of the pardon of ſin. Several emphatic words are uſed in ſcripture to expreſs mens violations of the divine law, which forcibly repreſent their odiouſneſs and enormity. They are denominated tranſgreſſions or departures from God; treſpaſſes whereby he is offended; ſins or deviations from the mark at which we ought to aim; iniquities whereby we obſtinately pervert the bleſſings of his goodneſs, and infringe on the rights of his majeſty. They are evils of the greateſt magnitude, which expoſe to the moſt awful cala-

* Rev. xxi. 4.

mities. How ineſtimable then the benefit of forgiveneſs! Several ſignificant words are employed in the Old and New Teſtament, to expreſs this privilege, which ſerve to inſtruct in its nature and effects. In conferring this invaluable bleſſing, God is ſaid to ſhew mercy; to exhibit a rich diſplay of this glorious attribute; to be gracious or propitious, through the atoning ſacrifice that he hath provided; not to impute ſin, or place it to account; to caſt it away, ſo that it ſhall never be found; to remit the puniſhment it deſerves; to forgive or pardon the offence. From theſe and ſimilar expreſſions, we learn the import of the precious bleſſing promiſed to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, introductory to the enjoyment of true felicity. It abſolves from the crimes that have been committed; it cancels guilt; it removes obligation to deſerved puniſhment; it takes away iniquity; it pacifies conſcience; it relieves from uneaſineſs; it aſſuages grief; and opens the way to the communication of every divine favour. Well might the royal Pſalmiſt exclaim, 'Bleſſed is he whoſe tranſgreſſion 'is forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered. Bleſſed is the man 'unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity *.' For this benefit, he calls upon all that was within him to bleſs the Lord. To this noble, yet arduous work of praiſe, he ſummons all his faculties, that with united vigour, they might render his praiſe the more glorious. To this delightful employment, we ought to be ſtimulated by the ineſtimable worth of this mercy, eſpecially when conjoined with the other next mentioned by the ſweet Pſalmiſt of Iſrael †, 'who heal-'eth all thy diſeaſes;' who hath brought thee out of the depths of diſtreſs, when afflicted with bodily diſtempers, and who hath cured thoſe ſpiritual maladies, that are attended with the moſt alarming ſymptoms, and fatal effects.

If you inquire to what time, to what ſtate of the church doth theſe predictions accord. A lively image of their more full accompliſhment preſents itſelf to view,

* Pſal. xxxii. 1. † Pſal. ciii. 3.

view, in the period wherein we have ſeen fulfilled in ſome meaſure, the prophecies contained in this chapter. Then the kingdom of Syria, which had long retained its firmneſs and ſtability, was undone. The military force ſent againſt the Jews was entirely routed, the kingdom was divided into factions, and that once formidable power fell a prey to the inhabitants of Judea, to the Egyptians, and to other nations, who were enriched by their ſpoils. This literal fulfilment by theſe events, leads forward our views to its farther accompliſhment by events analagous to theſe, which befel the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſhip whoſe tackling was looſed, repreſents the great body of mankind, which, at the appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, were immerſed in ſuperſtition and idolatry. Then the bands of tradition, cuſtom, and vain ceremonies, whereby they had long been united, were ſo looſed, that their leaders and temples were deſerted, and their rites deemed ſacred were laid aſide. At that memorable period, the church of God by the word of his teſtimony, obtained the victory over their adverſaries, and divided their ſpoils; whilſt the citizens of Zion, cured of their ſpiritual diſtempers, were bleſſed with holy ſerenity and joy, in the aſſurance of the remiſſion of their ſins, and in the proſpect of a city whoſe builder and maker is God. Then as it is written, Acts ix. 31. 'The churches had reſt 'throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and 'were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, 'and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, were mul-'tiplied.'

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE now enter on the diſcuſſion of the third prophetic oration, compriſed in the third book of Iſaiah's prophecies. The firſt part of it in the chapter before us, contains a ſolemn denunciation of divine vengeance againſt the powers of this world, which are adverſe to the people of God; eſpecially againſt ſome blood-thirſty formidable enemy to the church, to which is given the name of Edom, and to her metropolis that of Bozra. The terrible calamities that were to be inflicted upon their foes, are here propounded to confirm their faith and hope in the promiſes, whereby they are aſſured that they ſhall be delivered from the hands of their enemies, to afford them ground of joy and triumph in the Lord their God.—To excite them accurately to obſerve the diſpenſations of Providence, carefully to ſtudy the prophecies, and diligently to compare the events with the predictions; that they may become intimately acquainted with the ways of God.—The Holy Spirit, delineating by the pen of our Prophet, the future adverſe fortunes of the church, their afflictions, with the cauſes and authors of them, having exhibited the Syrian perſecution, proceeds to treat of another virulent oppreſſor, with the conſequent dreadful judgments which he ſhould ſuffer. The diſcourſe, remarkable for its magnificence and grandeur, commences with a judicial ſummons delivered to people of every deſcription, requiring them to hearken attentively to the decree of heaven, now made known, reſpecting the nations that diſtreſs and perſecute the ſervants of God, ver. 1.—The determined judgment itſelf is then publiſhed, and illuſtrated by references to its cauſe and effects, v. 2—4.—Leaving this general topic, our Prophet brings forward, from among the powers that oppoſe the kingdom of God, a ſpecific object, a particular people and country, againſt which he denounces extreme, irremediable, perpetual deſolation, under

der various figures and emblems, introduced with great elegance and dignity, v. 5—15.—The chapter concludes with a ſolemn confirmation of the certainty of the threatened calamities, and an explicit aſſurance of their accompliſhment, v. 16, 17.

CHAP. XXXIV.

COME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

The exordium to this ſublime prophetic diſcourſe is ſhort but highly intereſting, intended to excite general attention and cloſe application of mind to the very important ſubject which is here diſcuſſed. The call addreſſed to the whole intelligent creation is given in terms that are agreeably diverſified, by which it is forcibly urged.—*Ye nations*, deeply concerned in what I am about to ſay, on whom the judgments now to be denounced ſhall be inflicted—*Ye people*, of every tribe, who ought to receive inſtruction from the following predictions, with reſpect to your conduct in general, and particularly to the church of God, which you ought to beware of injuring.—*The earth and all that is therein.* All its inhabitants that are capable of underſtanding and perception, of every denomination, high and low, rich and poor.—*The world, and all that come forth of it*, in every generation; the whole race of mankind, of every age, clime, and deſcription. To you, O men I call; and my voice is to the ſons of men. *Come near*, place yourſelves in a proper poſture, to receive the inſtructions I am authorized by the God of the whole earth to communicate unto you. *Hear and hearken.* From you I demand ſerious attention; incline your ears unto

unto my words, and eagerly liſten to the predictions I am going to utter. Let all, without exception, hear with reverence and awe, and give undoubted credit to thoſe ſolemn declarations, which Jehovah will fulfil in their ſeaſon.—The obvious deſign of theſe repeated invitations, delivered with the greateſt earneſtneſs, is to ſhew that what follows is of the higheſt importance, deſerving to be thoroughly conſidered and laid to heart; and to intimate, that men are averſe to yield proper reſpect to the ſubject of this prophecy. With great propriety, therefore, are we admoniſhed to give it the utmoſt attention, and awakened to ſerious conſideration.—I hope, my brethren, that, in obedience to this preſſing demand, you are now prepared by this animated introduction, to give ear to the word of God, which I ſhall endeavour, through divine aſſiſtance, to explain and illuſtrate.

2 For the indignation of the LORD *is* upon all nations, and *his* fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly deſtroyed them, he hath delivered them to the ſlaughter.

In this and the two verſes that immediately follow, the divine decree is promulgated, reſpecting the narions which perſecute the church, and endeavour to overthrow the kingdom of the Moſt High. The ſubject is elucidated by its cauſes and effects. The deciſion is weighty and awful, and apt to ſtrike terror into the minds of thoſe to whom it is publiſhed.—*For the indignation of the Lord*, &c. Though indignation and fury are human paſſions, yet they are attributed to God, when he ſeems to act in ſome meaſure as men that are highly incenſed. The expreſſion imports that the fierce anger of Jehovah being kindled into a flame, by the atrocious wickedneſs of the adverſaries of his people, he would make them feel the direful effects of his hot diſpleaſure, which were to be extended not to ſome, but to all nations, without exception,

ception, who had ſhewn themſelves inimical to the intereſts of his church.—*And his fury upon all their armies.* By the moſt terrible judgments which the Almighty was about to execute, on the avowed active enemies of his ſervants, he would diſplay ſovereign contempt of their daring preſumption, his perfect deteſtation of their wickedneſs, and his juſt reſentment of their enormous crimes. His wrath and vengeance were in a ſpecial manner to be directed againſt their armies, which had been employed in making war againſt his ſaints, in diſtreſſing his inheritance, and in oppoſing his honour and intereſt in the world. How dreadful beyond conception muſt be his indignation! Who can ſtand before his fury who ſhaketh the earth out of his place, who cauſeth the pillars of heaven to tremble, who rebuketh the ſea and maketh it dry, who overturneth the mountains in his anger?—*He hath utterly deſtroyed them*, &c. Theſe words plainly intimate, that the people ſpoken of were devoted to deſtruction by the ſword, that their blood was to be ſhed in large meaſure, in the ſore conflicts wherein they were to be engaged. The threatened puniſhment, though then future is expreſſed as if it had been already inflicted, to intimate its ſpeedy approach and unqueſtionable certainty, according to the eternal purpoſe of him who worketh all in all.

3 Their ſlain alſo ſhall be caſt out, and their ſtink ſhall come up out of their carcaſes, and the mountains ſhall be melted with their blood.

The dead bodies of thoſe who were ſlain in battle were to be denied the privilege of burial, and ſuffered to lie in the open fields, that they might be devoured by ravenous beaſts and birds. Vaſt multitudes of carcaſes expoſed and mangled, would produce a diſagreeable ſtench, extremely offenſive and noxious to the ſurviving inhabitants. So immenſe a quantity of human blood was to be ſhed at this period,

riod, that, according to the hyperbolical language here uſed, not only the lower places of the earth were to be moiſtened by it, but even the mountains were to be thereby ſoftened. Than this no expreſſion could be ſtronger or more forcible.—By the fulfilment of this prediction, God poured out his wrath upon the heathen that have not known him, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon his name; for they have devoured Jacob, and laid waſte his dwelling place *. Though the ambition and cruelty of many nations were employed to chaſtiſe offending Iſrael, yet were they juſtly puniſhed in their turn with deſolating judgments, eſpecially with the ſword, which devours from one end of the land to the other; ſo that no fleſh hath peace †.

4 And all the hoſt of heaven ſhall be diſſolved, and the heavens ſhall be rolled together as a ſcroll; and all their hoſt ſhall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig-tree.

To elucidate the ſubject whereof our Prophet treats, another emblem of peculiar excellence is introduced, taken from a terrible ſtorm, by which the heavens and their luminaries ſeem to be diſturbed and obſcured. The overthrow of nations is compared to the celeſtial bodies, when dreadfully agitated and falling from their places. This ſpecies of metaphor, which is truly ſublime, is admirably adapted to the prophetic ſtile, particularly to the ſubject of this prediction. Some degree of obſcurity is neceſſary in prophecy, ariſing from the impropriety of completely revealing every thing connected with the events that are foretold; which, though clearly indicated, the manner and circumſtances relative to their accompliſhment, are left involved in uncertainty. For this purpoſe the imagery here exhibited is excellently adapted, whilſt it expreſſes the mind of the Prophet

* Pſal. lxxix. 6, 7. † Jer. xii. 12.

Prophet, and the magnitude of the event, it conceals minuter incidents attending the ſubject of the prophecy. As the prediction now before us cannot be literally underſtood, we muſt have recourſe to the figurative and more interior ſenſe of the words, agreeably to which it muſt be interpreted.—Great public calamities are deſcribed by the Prophets, as if the order of nature was inverted and totally changed. A remarkable inſtance occurs in this verſe.

And all the hoſt of heaven ſhall be diſſolved, &c. The hoſt of heaven, the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, may denote perſons occupying ſuperior ſtations, poſſeſſing extenſive power and influence; ſuch as kings, princes, and ſubordinate great men. This hoſt *ſhall be diſſolved*, or *conſumed*, as the Hebrew word ſignifies; they ſhall be deprived of their former ſplendid appearance, which ſhall be exchanged for that which is much leſs luminous, and attractive of notice and reſpect, or they ſhall be altogether extinguiſhed.—*The heavens ſhall be rolled together*, &c. The heavens may denote the whole ſuperior ſtate of the empire, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, which ſhall be involved in obſcurity; ſo that all the admirable order, elegance, and beauty they had diſplayed, ſhall entirely diſappear. The expreſſion points at the total abolition of the political ſyſtem of the kingdom, that is the ſubject of the prediction.—*And all their hoſt*. Supreme and ſubordinate rulers, with public teachers, whoſe buſineſs is to enlighten the ſtate by their authority, inſtructions, and example. The perſons who filled theſe ſeveral ſtations, and ſerved as luminaries to the people, ſhall be diveſted of their office and character.—*They ſhall fall down as the leaf falleth*, &c. Their downfal is illuſtrated by two well known ſimilitudes. As the leaf, after having been agitated for ſome time by a ſtrong wind or tempeſt, drops connection with the tree whereby it was nouriſhed; in like manner, people who had been in eminence and power were to quit their places. As a falling fig or blaſted fruit is blown down from the trees whereon they

grew, and lie uſeleſs ſcattered on the ground; ſo the perſons ſpoken of were to be driven from their ſtation, and their relation to the ſtate diſſolved.—The tremendous judgment, which is here denounced in hyperbolical language, againſt the cruel enemies of the church of God, intimates that a thorough change was to take place in their circumſtances and government, and that their civil and religious officers were to be aboliſhed. And according to this prediction, the powers that have been adverſe to the kingdom of God have ſucceſſively come to nought; and thoſe who perſiſt in their oppoſition to its intereſts, ſhall in their turn alſo be certainly overthrown. Indeed all the operations of divine Providence, reſpecting the nations of the earth hoſtile to the ſervants of God, tend to the fulfilment of this prophecy in its largeſt extent.

5 For my ſword ſhall be bathed in heaven: behold it ſhall come down on Idumea, and upon the people of my curſe, to judgment.

Our Prophet now deſcends from a general to a particular object, and denounces terrible vengeance to be executed againſt Edom by means of the ſword. He declares that the time was approaching, wherein the wrath of the Almighty being kindled againſt the malignant enemies of his people, who had long oppreſſed and afflicted them, he would make a terrible ſlaughter among their princes, their rich and great men. The figurative terms uſed to deſcribe this event, are taken from the practice of a perſon of diſtinguiſhed rank, who, intending to prepare a great feaſt, ſlays ſuch a number of lambs, goats, and rams, that the knife employed in killing them may be ſaid to be ſatiated with blood.—The ſword of the Lord may denote thoſe deadly inſtruments, which he was to employ for inflicting his righteous judgments upon thoſe who had acted in hoſtility againſt his church. This ſword, theſe weapons, ſhall be bathed, or, as

the

the Hebrew word ſignifies, ſhall be glutted with blood in the heavens. If the heavens are underſtood literally, the expreſſion refers to the decree of the Moſt High, which appointed the inſtruments of vengeance, and from whence they derived their efficacy, for accompliſhing the purpoſe here ſpecified. If they are meant figuratively, the prediction imports, that the ſword ſhould be bathed in the blood of mighty eminent men, which was to be ſhed in large meaſures.—*Behold it ſhall come down on Idumea*, and ſhall devour with irreſiſtible fury the inhabitants of that devoted country, ſituated to the ſouth of Judea.—*And upon the people of my curſe, to judgment.* As the children of Jacob were bleſſed, ſo the poſterity of Eſau were curſed, of the God of heaven and earth. The prophetic benediction pronounced by their father on the former runs thus: 'Curſed be every one that curſeth 'thee, and bleſſed is he that bleſſeth thee *.' With theſe words of the patriarch, the ſolemn declaration emitted by the prophet Jeremiah perfectly accords. 'For I have ſworn by myſelf, ſaith the Lord, that 'Bozrah ſhall become a deſolation, a reproach, a 'waſte, and a curſe; and all the cities thereof ſhall 'be a perpetual waſte †.' The Edomites uniformly diſcovered inveterate malice and envy againſt the Iſraelites; and, notwithſtanding they were brethren, they would not allow them a paſſage through their land, but came out againſt them in a hoſtile manner. They uſed violence againſt the Jews; and when the Babylonians carried them away captive, the Edomites encouraged them to raze Jeruſalem to the foundation. Juſtly therefore were they conſigned to that deſtruction which God threatened to inflict upon them by his ſervant Ezekiel; 'Thus ſaith the Lord 'God, I will alſo ſtretch out mine hand upon Edom, 'and will cut off man and beaſt from it; and I will 'make it deſolate ‡.' With propriety, then, are the inhabitants of Idumea called the people of God's curſe; *i. e.* devoted to certain puniſhment and miſery.

* Gen. xxvii. 29. † Jer. xlix. 13. ‡ Chap. xxv. 13.

ry.—It is written, curſed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Let us then have immediate recourſe, in the manner he hath preſcribed, to him who redeems from the curſe. Affected with our deplorable condition, and laying aſide ſecurity and ſelf confidence, let us renounce thoſe ſins which have expoſed us to deſtruction, and cordially ſubmit to the Son of God as our Saviour and Lord.

6 The ſword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatneſs, *and* with the blood of lambs and goats, and with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a ſacrifice in Bozrah, and a great ſlaughter in the land of Idumea.

The ſword of Jehovah, the inſtrument which in righteous judgment he was to employ in laying waſte the people, who had become the objects of his dread diſpleaſure, is affirmed to be filled or ſatiated with blood, and made fat with fatneſs. Theſe figurative expreſſions, like that uſed in the preceding verſe, in which actions proper to living creatures are attributed to this weapon of war, ſtrongly intimate the prodigious devaſtation which was to be made in the land of Edom or Idumea. So great ſhould be the ſlaughter in that country, that the ſword was incapable of acting longer, with that keenneſs and effect which it had formerly done. The country of Edom abounded with fine cattle, eſpecially with thoſe of the leſſer kinds, ſuch as rams, goats, and lambs, which were the animals appointed to be offered in ſacrifice upon the altar of God, under the former diſpenſation. The vaſt multitudes of them which were to be ſlain, along with the Edomites, their proprietors, by the ſword or the knife uſed for killing beaſts, would ſo blunt and wear off the edge of the ſharpeſt inſtruments, that they ſhould appear to have had ſufficient employment, and fully to juſtify this ſtriking deſcription.

For

For the Lord hath a ſacrifice, &c. Bozrah, which ſignifies a fortified city incloſed by high walls, was anciently the name of the metropolis of Edom. In this place, or in ſome city and country analogous to the places here mentioned, it is affirmed that the Lord hath a ſacrifice. Sacrifices were anciently inſtituted for the honour of God, to demonſtrate his hatred of ſin, and the neceſſity of blood being ſhed, to make expiation for the guilt of the tranſgreſſors. For theſe purpoſes a ſacrifice was to be made at Bozrah, of the rich, the great, and powerful enemies of the people of God; whereby his wrath was to be revealed from heaven againſt their unrighteouſneſs, and eſpecially againſt the enmity they had diſcovered to his church. This ſacrifice and great ſlaughter was to be made not only of the animals here mentioned, but of the inhabitants of Idumea, their proprietors, who were deſtined to death and deſtruction. In the prophetic ſtile, the names of various animals are given to men, of whom, in ſome reſpects, they afford a ſymbolical repreſentation. The fierce, the proud, and powerful enemies of the ſervants of God, are ſpoken of under the deſignation of lions, unicorns, and bulls; thoſe who are denominated the fat ones of the earth, and the mighty, who are the proper objects of divine vengeance, and ſuited for the ſlaughter, are here mentioned by the names of lambs, goats, and rams. Ezekiel, as well as Iſaiah, hath ſet forth the prince and leaders of thoſe powers which are adverſe to the kingdom of God, under the ſame emblems; and has added to the boldneſs of the imagery, by introducing Jehovah ſummoning all the fowls of the air, and the beaſts of the field, to the feaſt which he has prepared for them, by the ſlaughter of the adverſaries of his glory.—This judicial ſentence pronounced upon the literal Edom and Bozrah, was in ſome meaſure executed by the Maccabees, who ſlew above 60,000 of the Edomites, and deſtroyed their fortreſſes and ſtrong holds *. In the myſtical and more

* 2 Maccab. x. 15. *et ſeq.*

more recondite meaning the prophecy hath been alſo fulfilled. In the allegorical ſenſe of the words, ſome country and city may be intended, which bears a ſtriking reſemblance to the literal Edom and Bozrah, in the ſame manner as the rulers and inhabitants of Jeruſalem are addreſſed under the character of the princes of Sodom and people of Gomorrah *. The Edomites, who were the poſterity of Abraham, once conſtituted part of the church of God, and profeſſed the true religion which after they had corrupted, and were become addicted to idolatry and ſuperſtition, they grievouſly perſecuted. In like manner the people of the myſtical Edom, the celebrated city of Rome, after having for ſome time profeſſed the true doctrine and worſhip of the Son of God, debaſed the Chriſtian religion by their odious ſuperſtitions, and became virulent perſecutors of the ſaints whoſe blood they ſhed, and whom they treated with the greateſt cruelty. On this account the moſt tremendous judgments are denounced againſt them, not only in this prophecy, but eſpecially in the correſponding predictions contained in the book of Revelation.

7 And the unicorns ſhall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land ſhall be ſoaked with blood, and their duſt made fat with fatneſs.

The unicorn is an animal remarkable for ſtrength, for ferocity, and the large ſize of his horn. Of the bullocks and the bulls, which are well known, it is unneceſſary to attempt any deſcription. It ſeems a great ſlaughter was to be made of theſe creatures in the land of Idumea, at the time this prophecy was literally fulfilled. I ſuppoſe, however, that they are chiefly to be conſidered as emblematical of the powerful, fierce, obſtinate enemies of the people of God, who are ſometimes ſpoken of in ſcripture under theſe names. In the 22d Pſalm, David, as a type of Jeſus

* Chap. i. 10. of this Prophecy.

ſus Chriſt, enforces his requeſt for divine ſupport by this argument, 'Many bulls have compaſſed me;' and again, 'thou haſt heard me from the horns of 'the unicorns*;' by which expreſſion, applied to Jeſus Chriſt, may be meant, that his prayers were heard when conflicting with the Scribes and Phariſees, with Herod and Pontius Pilate, all of whom he vanquiſhed by his death. The proud, the mighty, and the ſtubborn foes of the church of God, repreſented by the animals here mentioned, ſhould, according to this prediction, be caſt down and deſtroyed. The dreadful conſequence ſhall be—*And their land ſhall be ſoaked with blood*, &c. as formerly from time to time it had been moiſtened and ſoftened by rain from heaven.—And the duſt that had been dry and barren was to be enriched with human blood, and the carcaſes of thoſe that were ſlain and had no burial. How awful the righteous vengeance of the Almighty! when he renders tribulation to them that troubled his faithful ſervants, his wrath becomes terrible as fire, and conſumes his enemies round about.

8 For *it is* the day of the LORD's vengeance, *and* the year of recompences for the controverſy of Zion.

The Prophet declares that Almighty God was about to avenge the injuries done to Zion, and ſeverely to puniſh the crimes of her enemies. The moſt proper time fixed by infinite wiſdom for this purpoſe was to arrive at the period wherein this prophecy ſhould be accompliſhed. Though the righteous Lord may bear long with the wicked, and permit them to go on in their treſpaſſes, yet he will bring down their violent dealing on their own head, and repay them according to their deeds. 'Vengeance and recom-'penſe is mine; I will repay, ſaith the Lord†.' Vengeance belongeth unto God, and to him alone; it is his peculiar work, againſt whom tranſgreſſion is committed;

* Ver. 12. and 21. † Deut. xxxii. 35.

mitted; it is he who hath appointed magiſtrates to execute juſt puniſhment upon evil doers. The conſummate purity of his nature, his inflexible righteouſneſs, his infinite power, and everlaſting faithfulneſs, give the ſtrongeſt aſſurance that in the moſt proper ſeaſon he will avenge his own elect. Beſides, in his word of truth, he ſolemnly and repeatedly declares, that he will render a recompenſe to his adverſaries; whilſt attentive obſervers of his providential diſpenſations cannot fail to perceive that he actually doeth as he hath ſaid.—*In the year of recompences for the controverſy of Zion.* This controverſy is the ſharp conteſt that ſubſiſts between the church of God and the wicked men of this world, who on all occaſions diſcover rooted enmity againſt the godly. This controverſy is maintained with great warmth on both ſides. The people of God, firmly attached to truth and righteouſneſs, peremptorily refuſe to make any prohibited conceſſions to their antagoniſts, whilſt they prudently refrain from reproach and injury. The ungodly and profane bitterly revile and upbraid their opponents, and endeavour, by acts of oppreſſion and cruelty, ſo to exaſperate them as to induce them to retaliate. Whilſt this diſcord and variance continues, the time of recompenſe commences; Jehovah himſelf appears as the ſupreme judge who determines the cauſe in agitation, in the courſe of his providence; by inflicting terrible judgments on the aggreſſors, and vindicating the injured innocence of his ſervants.—I conclude this article by addreſſing you in the words of the apoſtle Paul, writing to the ſaints at Rome: 'Dearly beloved, avenge not 'yourſelves; but rather give place unto wrath: for 'it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith 'the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed 'him; if he thirſt, give him drink: for in ſo doing 'thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not 'overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'

9 And

* Rom. xii. 19, 20, 21.

9 And the ſtreams thereof ſhall be turned into pitch, and the duſt thereof into brimſtone, and the land thereof ſhall become burning pitch

In this and the ſix verſes that immediately follow, is recorded the latter part of the judicial ſentence pronounced upon the land of Idumea, wherein it is adjudged to perpetual deſolation. Our Prophet, whoſe copious language and powers of deſcription are truly admirable, under the choiceſt and ſtrongeſt figures, repreſents the country and city above mentioned as deſolated by war, as laid waſte by fire, and devoted to everlaſting deſtruction—deprived not only of its inhabitants, but reduced to the miſerable ſtate, wherein it ſhould become the reſidence of thoſe wild animals which ſhun intercourſe with man.—*And the ſtreams thereof ſhall be turned into pitch*, &c. There ſeems to be an alluſion in theſe words to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, with the neighbouring cities, on account of their extreme wickedneſs. 'The Lord God rained upon them fire and 'brimſtone from heaven; he overthrew thoſe cities 'and all the plain about them, with all the inhabi-'tants, and all that grew upon the ground *.' That once fruitful valley, which is reported to extend about thirty miles in length and ten miles in breadth, continues to this day a great lake, having an offenſive ſmell, ſo that there is not a living creature to be ſeen there. In ſcripture, this ſevere puniſhment which terminated in utter ruin, is mentioned above twenty times, as an example of the deſtruction of Iſrael †, and of the devaſtation to be brought on their enemies, particularly on the Edomites, as we read in Jeremiah xlix. 17, 18. The apoſtle Jude affirms, that this perpetual monument of the wrath of God revealed from heaven, is emblematical of the vengeance of eternal fire which the ungodly ſhall ſuffer, eſpecially thoſe that deſpiſe the goſpel. The expreſſion

* Gen. xix. 24. † Deut. xxix. 23.

before us ſtrongly intimates, in hyperbolical language, that when God would execute righteous vengeance on the enemies of his people, ſuch a change was to be made in the country they poſſeſs, as if the ſtreams were converted into pitch, the duſt into brimſtone, and the land into burning pitch—That the important advantages which they had enjoyed were to prove dangerous and noxious, and that they ſhould experience the moſt dreadful alterations in their circumſtances, at the time when God would viſit them for their ſins. Indeed the mind of man cannot conceive a more horrible ſcene than that which is here exhibited, eſpecially when taken in connection with what is immediately added.

10 It ſhall not be quenched night nor day; the ſmoke thereof ſhall go up for ever; from generation to generation it ſhall lie waſte; none ſhall paſs through it for ever and ever.

Iſaiah ſeems to look beyond the temporal evils of this preſent life, to the everlaſting deſtruction of the wicked in the future ſtate. Having ſuggeſted the terrible idea of burning pitch, leſt any might imagine that the conflagration would be ſoon over, he explicitly declares, that the miſeries whereof he ſpeaks ſhall have neither interruption nor end. The torment of the inveterate enemies of the kingdom of God ſhall never ceaſe or be alleviated; neither day nor night ſhall yield them relief. To confirm the predicted perpetual deſolation, one expreſſion is ſubjoined to another, the more deeply to impreſs the momentous truth upon the minds of men. What a terrible aggravation of diſtreſs, when to the agonizing ſenſe of preſent miſery is added the certain proſpect of its endleſs duration! It is unneceſſary to enlarge; the judgment here denounced compriſes the greateſt evils that can be ſuſtained in this and the future world.—In puniſhing tranſgreſſion, the Almighty can turn the greateſt comforts into the greateſt afflictions.

ſlictions. The ſtreams, the duſt, and the land he can convert into burning pitch; the fire which ſerves to warm, he can give power to conſume and devour; the moſt pleaſant waters he can make to overflow and to deluge; the action of the air, from being ſalubrious and wholeſome, he can render the means of conveying peſtilential diſeaſes. The ſun that illuminates the world, he can command to withhold his light; the ſtars in their courſes to fight againſt the enemies of his people; the heavens, which fructify the earth by their benign influences, to ſhower down fire and brimſtone; and this earth, by whoſe productions its inhabitants are ſupported, to become barren and deſolate. The moſt uſeful creatures, at the divine command, ſhall prove the means of executing awful vengeance on the workers of iniquity. Above all things, then brethren, be ſolicitous that you may be delivered from the wrath of God that cometh on the children of diſobedience.

11 ¶ But the cormorant and the bittern ſhall poſſeſs it; the owl, alſo, and the raven ſhall dwell in it: and he ſhall ſtretch out upon it the line of confuſion, and the ſtones of emptineſs.

The land and city which is the ſubject of this prediction, being diveſted of their inhabitants, ſhall be frequented by different kinds of animals, which take up their reſidence in thoſe ſolitary places, that have been deſerted by their inhabitants. The ſeveral ſorts of creatures here mentioned being moſtly the ſame with thoſe ſpecified in the prediction delivered againſt Babylon, in the 13th chapter of this book, I ſhall do little more at preſent than mention them. The cormorant or pelican, is a bird that reſorts to ſolitary places—The bittern is a fowl that hath a doleful cry, and repairs to marſhy grounds—The owl, which hath alſo a melancholy voice, retires to old ruins left by their former poſſeſſors—The raven, that

fills

fills the air with a croaking noiſe, feeds upon the carcaſes of the dead. All theſe creatures were to take up their reſidence in the deſolate country and city whereof the deſtruction is here foretold.—*And he ſhall ſtretch out upon it the line of confuſion*, &c. This expreſſion ſeems to be borrowed from the practice of architects and workmen, who uſe lines in building, levelling, and examining their work. In reference to this method taken by artiſts, when God aſſured his people that Jeruſalem ſhould be rebuilt, he promiſed that a line ſhall be ſtretched forth upon that city *. The line of confuſion which Jehovah was to ſtretch out upon the ſubject of this prophecy, may denote, that as the Lord when he builds executes his work with the utmoſt exactneſs and ſkill, ſo when he overthrows, he accurately metes out whatever is deſtined to deſtruction; and that every thing comprehended in this meaſurement ſhall be reduced to a large confuſed maſs, deſtitute of order and beauty.—*And the ſtones of emptineſs*. Stones are commonly remarkable for ſolidity and weight; whereas thoſe here mentioned are ſaid to be empty, devoid of thoſe qualities which are neceſſary to their being employed in erecting any uſeful work in town or country. The words may intimate, that the deſolation which God threatened to inflict upon Edom was to be irreparable, that nothing effectual could ever be done to reſtore that kingdom to its former condition.

12 They ſhall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none *ſhall be* there, and all her princes ſhall be nothing.

Such was to be the diſmal aſpect of the country, that though a very few of the loweſt order of the people might eſcape the general devaſtation, yet none of the nobles or great men could be found, who were capable of repairing the ruins of the ſtate, or of aſſuming the reins of government with the leaſt proſpect

* Zech. i. 16.

ſpect of retrieving their affairs. Enquiry having been made for ſuch perſons, not one could be found remaining to undertake the arduous taſk. It is added, —*And all her princes ſhall be nothing.* None of thoſe connected with the royal family ſurvived the dreadful cataſtrophe; all having periſhed in the general calamity that deſolated the empire. How forlorn and helpleſs the condition! If that ſtate is in deplorable circumſtances which has children for their princes, perſons who have no more underſtanding and ability than children, how miſerable their ſituation, who have not left among them any individual who can exerciſe authority, and govern the people by wholeſome laws! Then, as in Iſrael when there was no judge or king over them, every man doeth that which is right in his own eyes. If men are not controlled by wiſe and good laws, they are oppreſſed by unruly paſſions; and thoſe who complained of the tyranny of perſons in power, may find that they are more cruelly oppreſſed by their own luſts and thoſe who ſtand on the ſame level with themſelves.

13 And thorns ſhall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortreſſes thereof: and it ſhall be a habitation of dragons, *and* a court for owls.

14 The wild beaſts of the deſart ſhall alſo meet with the wild beaſts of the iſland, and the ſatyr ſhall cry to his fellow: the ſcreech owl alſo ſhall reſt there, and find for herſelf a place of reſt.

15 There ſhall the great owl make her neſt, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her ſhadow: there ſhall the vultures alſo be gathered, every one with her mate.

According to this prediction, which is here amplified and illuſtrated, the land of Idumea and the city of Bozrah being depopulated, were to become an unfrequented

frequented deſart. In the ſumptuous houſes formerly occupied by their princes and nobles, thorns were to ſpring up. In the fortified places, which in former times had been kept in great order, were to grow nettles and brambles. The expreſſions plainly intimate, that the grandeur and ſtrength of Edom were to be annihilated; and that thoſe places wherein they enjoyed their greateſt pleaſures, and in which they placed their chief confidence, ſhould be reduced to ruins, and prove awful monuments of God's righteous diſpleaſure. The doleful creatures and wild beaſts which are here ſpecified, ſhall take up their dreary abode in the habitations of the enemies of the church of God. Thither they ſhall reſort; there they ſhall haunt and meet one with another; there they ſhall take up their reſidence, build their neſts, hatch without diſturbance, and bring up their young ones.—How dreadful the revolutions in countries, cities, and kingdoms, to which the ſins of their inhabitants have given riſe! Thoſe populous lands and great empires which long flouriſhed, and are highly celebrated in hiſtory, have been turned into a barren wilderneſs and ruinous heaps. The Edomites and the other nations who dealt cruelly and perfidiouſly with Iſrael of old, were cut off, deſolated, and exterminated. And theſe judgments of the Almighty, which make aſtoniſhing changes on the face of the earth and in the conditions of men, ſhall in due time overtake all the enemies of the people of God. Let us then take heed that we participate not with Edom in their ſins, leſt we ſhare in their puniſhments.

As Iſrael was a figure of the Chriſtian church, ſo the Edomites, who were inimical to them, repreſent the enemies of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. Every age hath its Edomites; the actors are changed, and the ſcene is ſhifted, but the ſtage and the drama are the ſame. The awful vengeance which God laid upon the literal Edom and Bozrah, for the violence they had done unto Iſrael, and the innocent blood they had ſhed in their land, was in part executed by the

the Maccabees, and afterwards completed in ſuch a manner as hath not been done to other nations *. And with reſpect to the myſtical Edom, the Roman empire, which is ſaid to have been compoſed chiefly of the poſterity of Eſau, who deſtroyed the ſecond temple of the Lord, who poured out the blood of the Jews as water, and whoſe citizens in following ages have perſecuted and moſt inhumanly treated the confeſſors of the truth; its future fortunes, which muſt be very eventful, depend entirely on the counſels and providence of God, to whoſe power none can ſet bounds; who can do whatſoever he pleaſeth, and who will do whatſoever he hath purpoſed and publiſhed by his ſervants the prophets. From the prophecy we have been conſidering, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe, what, if conſiſtent with the divine will and glory, we wiſh may be averted, that devaſtation and utter ruin await the Papal dominions.—'They that hate the 'righteous ſhall be deſolate †.' The evil of puniſhment reſults from the evil of ſin; and no ſin brings on ſuch deſolation as the malicious hatred and perſecution of the upright ſervants of God. Whoſo doubts of this truth ought attentively to ſurvey the deſolation brought upon the once highly favoured nation of the Jews, for their enmity againſt the King of righteouſneſs and his faithful ſubjects.

16 ¶ Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of theſe ſhall fail, none ſhall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his ſpirit it hath gathered them.

This and the following verſe contains a ſolemn confirmation of the certain approach of the above mentioned dreadful calamities. The hypocritical and profane, who heard of theſe awful improbable events, might call in queſtion the truth of the predictions emitted by our Prophet and the upright ſervants of God: aſtoniſhed at the grandeur of their prophecies,

* See Joſephus xii. 11, 12. † Pſal. xxxiv. 21.

phecies, they could with difficulty yield to them the unſuſpecting confidence which they claimed. For the benefit of perſons of both deſcriptions, the moſt explicit aſſurance is given of their fulfilment.—The ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, committed to writing at the time wherein this prophecy was delivered, compoſes the book of the Lord which we are required to ſearch and to read. It compriſes the books commonly called the books of Moſes, from which we learn that all the creatures are ſubject to the decree and the command of Jehovah; and wherein it is foretold that 'Edom ſhall be a poſſeſſion; Seir alſo ſhall 'be a poſſeſſion for his enemies: and Iſrael ſhall do 'valiantly. Out of Jacob ſhall come he that ſhall 'have dominion, and ſhall deſtroy him that remain-'eth of the city *.' It includes the Pſalms of David, wherein the church requeſts that God would remember the children of Edom for their wickedneſs and cruelty †. It comprehends the prophecies of Joel, who expreſsly declares that Edom ſhall be a deſolate wilderneſs ‡; and of Amos, by whom the Lord ſaid, 'I will ſend a fire upon Teman, which ſhall devour 'the palaces of Bozrah §;'—eſpecially the prophecy which we have now been conſidering, that conſtitutes an eſſential part of the book of the Lord which ought to be carefully conſulted. The direction here given, plainly ſuppoſes that this prophecy was to be preſerved in exiſtence to the time of its accompliſhment; ſo that people of dubious and inquiſitive minds might have opportunity of comparing the predictions with the events, in order to be convinced of their exact correſpondence.

The lovers of the truth are exhorted to ſeek out and read this book of the Lord, to ſearch and peruſe it with the moſt ſedulous attention, with due ſeriouſneſs of mind, and earneſt deſire to receive inſtruction. It is not enough to read it in a careleſs ſuperficial manner; it ought to be ſtudied and examined with the greateſt diligence and impartiality. To diſcover its

* Numb. xxiv. 18, 19. † Pſal. cxxxvii. 7. ‡ Chap. iii. 19. § Chap. i. 10.

its genuine import, conſider the connection and deſign of its ſeveral component parts, and compare ſpiritual things with ſpiritual. Eſpecially ought the various events of divine Providence to be viewed with reference to ſcripture prophecies, of which they are the accompliſhment, that ſo we may be eſtabliſhed in the belief of the divine teſtimony, and the faithfulneſs of God in his diſpenſations.—Apply your minds, then, brethren, with the greateſt aſſiduity to read and to ſtudy the word of God, which is greatly enlarged ſince the days of Iſaiah. In this ſacred repoſitory of divine knowledge, you may find thoſe precious pearls that will adorn the hidden man of the heart; thoſe reviving cordials that will reſtore your ſouls; thoſe ſalutary inſtructions that will enrich your minds; thoſe glorious proſpects that will invigorate and gladden your ſouls, and thoroughly furniſh you for every good work. Having ſummoned in all your ſtraggling thoughts and concentered your affections in this important work to which we are here invited, read and ſearch the book of the Lord, which was written by his authority, dictated by his Spirit, and which unfolds his providence, his law, and goſpel. With intenſe ſtudy of the ſcriptures, unite earneſt prayer to God, that he may open your eyes to behold the wondrous things which they contain; and that by his Spirit he may render them effectual for your ſanctification and conſolation.

No one of theſe ſhall fail, &c. The moſt intimate connection ſubſiſts between all the parts of divine revelation, and betwixt the prophecies and the events whereby they are accompliſhed; the one exactly correſponds to the other: the former, reſulting from the divine counſels of Jehovah, gives riſe to the latter; and the latter reſpects the former, as the conſequence does the antecedent; whilſt both being confronted, announce with perfect harmony the infinite wiſdom and glory of the Governor of the univerſe. The fulfilment of the predictions contained in the ſcriptures, depending on the power and veracity of Jehovah, it is impoſſible that any of them can

fail of being punctually verified in due ſeaſon. What Jeſus Chriſt ſaith of the law is equally true of the prophecies, 'Till heaven and earth paſs, one jot or 'one tittle ſhall in no wiſe paſs till all be fulfilled *.' And elſewhere he explicitly affirms, 'that all things 'muſt be fulfilled which were written in the law of 'Moſes, and in the prophets, and in the pſalms con-'cerning him †.' When diſcourſing of the deſolation of Jeruſalem, he hath theſe remarkable words, 'Theſe be the days of vengeance, that all things 'which are written may be fulfilled ‡.' Whatſoever, therefore, God hath foretold by his ſervants, ſhall certainly be brought to paſs in the courſe of his providence.

For my mouth it hath commanded, &c. Theſe words contain farther ſolemn confirmation of the above predictions. Jehovah, who ſpake by our Prophet, hath expreſsly declared, that the events here foretold ſhall be preciſely accompliſhed according to this prophecy. The Almighty having irreverſibly determined that the threatened calamities ſhall be inflicted upon the land of Idumea, no doubt can be entertained that he will perform what he hath ſpoken. Leſt any heſitation might ariſe on this ſubject, it is added,—*And his Spirit it hath gathered them*; namely, the Spirit of the Lord who ſpake by the mouth of Iſaiah, when employed in publiſhing the mind of God to the church. The eternal Spirit, by whom all the hoſt of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth were made, by whom all the beaſts of the field and the fowls of the air were brought to Adam, to receive their names; and ſome of each ſort were conducted to Noah, that he might put them into the ark,—can eaſily carry into effect the moſt improbable events. This Spirit, whenever he pleaſeth, can collect the doleful creatures ſpecified in this prediction, to thoſe deſolate places which he hath aſſigned them for a habitation.

17 And he hath caſt the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line; they

* Mat. v. 18. † Luke xxiv. 44. ‡ Luke xxi. 22.

they ſhall poſſeſs it for ever, from generation to generation ſhall they dwell therein.

The figurative expreſſions here uſed are taken from the practice of dividing inheritances into ſeveral parts, among thoſe appointed co-heirs of the eſtate. In performing this buſineſs, the lot is caſt to aſcertain to whom each diviſion ſhall belong; and then the ſeveral parts are meaſured by line, to adjuſt their extent and boundaries. In this manner the land of Canaan was divided among the tribes of Iſrael *. In alluſion to this cuſtom, our Prophet affirms, that the creatures he had mentioned were to have proper places of reſidence aſſigned to them, in the deſolated country of Idumea—That, according to their ſeveral inſtincts and the laws of Providence, they were to reſort thither, and to find dwellings agreeable to their lonely nature, of which they might enjoy undiſturbed poſſeſſion from age to age.—In this, as in many other predictions, the Prophets ſeem to ſpeak hyperbolically, and to foretel events beyond all human expectation. In this mode of expreſſion, a myſtical or ſecondary ſenſe is incloſed; things temporal incloſe, as it were, things ſpiritual, more excellent and important. The expoſitions given by apoſtles and evangeliſts of ancient prophecies, ſuggeſt ſeveral inſtances of the truth of this remark. According to this principle, the allegorical interpretation of what is here foretold ought carefully to be inveſtigated, in order to perceive the full completion of the prophecy, in conſidering which I have already too long detained you. This circumſtance, worthy of attention, ought to induce us to ſearch the ſcriptures, which unfold the beautiful harmonious plan of divine Providence from the beginning to the end of the world; which inform of the riſe and fall of nations, and ſhew that all events ſhall terminate in the overthrow of the wicked, and the eſtabliſhment of the everlaſting kingdom of God our Saviour, to whom be honour and glory world without end. Amen.

PRELI-

* See Joſh. xviii. 6.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

HAVING finiſhed the diſcuſſion of the firſt part of our Prophet's diſcourſe, we proceed to conſider the ſecond part, recorded in the chapter before us. After foretelling the deſtruction of the powerful nation of Edom, which for long time proved adverſe to the church, he proclaims the jubilee of the kingdom of God, with its joyful glorious conſequences. The ſection may be divided into three diſtinct parts.—In the firſt, the propoſition is brought forward, reſpecting the conſolation which the people of God may derive from the judgments inflicted upon their adverſaries, and the flouriſhing happy ſtate to which the church after that period was to be advanced, in the poſſeſſion of the moſt excellent privileges, ver. 1, 2.—In the ſecond, a ſeaſonable pathetic exhortation is addreſſed to the faithful ſervants of the Moſt High, encouraging them to comfort their infirm, dejected, and afflicted brethren, with the pleaſing expectation of recompenſe and ſalvation, v. 3, 4.—In the third part, the glorious prerogatives to be enjoyed by the faithful, at the period referred to, are repreſented as producing the moſt delightful aſtoniſhing change in mens condition. Among theſe the following are particularly ſtated: Greater ſpiritual illumination than in former times—alacrity in performing holy duties—extenſive communications of divine grace—the purity and preſervation of the church in a ſtate of tranquillity—with the progreſſive joy and gladneſs which was to reſult from this rich profuſion of precious benefits. The whole ſection exhibits a complete model of the church in its beſt ſtate upon earth, enjoying all thoſe benefits which are neceſſary to preſent felicity and comfort.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

THE wilderneſs and the ſolitary place ſhall be glad for them: and the deſart ſhall rejoice, and bloſſom as the roſe.

The prophecy we are now to conſider, contains a beautiful figurative deſcription, of the glorious conſequences that were to follow the awful judgments threatened to be inflicted upon Edom. They were to be ſucceeded by the reſtoration of the church to a ſtate of the higheſt proſperity, and the converſion of the nations which hitherto had reſembled the deſart. —The ſubject whereof our Prophet treats, is introduced under the appellation of the wilderneſs, the ſolitary place, and the deſart, to which are aſcribed exultation and joy, on account of the deſolation of Idumea; the life, the beauty, and fragrance of a roſe; the comelineſs and glory of Lebanon and Carmel; the viſion of the excellency and majeſty of God. It muſt be a rational ſubject of which he ſpeaks, that is capable of poſſeſſing theſe qualities and privileges, and can be no other than the church of the living God, compoſed of thoſe nations which, in their natural or decayed ſtate, juſtly merited the character by which they are repreſented. Prior to their introduction into this bleſſed ſociety, which is the object of God's peculiar care, they were involved in error, immerſed in ſuperſtition, the votaries of falſe religion, deſtitute of ſalutary knowledge, devoid of the influences of the Holy Spirit, and ſtrangers to communion with God: their condition was unpleaſant and unfruitful, like that of a wilderneſs. On theſe and ſimilar accounts, their circumſtances were truly deplorable, deſerving commiſeration and pity. Being cultivated, however, by means of the word and ſervants of Jehovah; being enriched by divine grace, and watered with the dew of heaven, they laid aſide their former ſad and miſerable appearance; they recovered

covered new life and vigour, beauty and fruitfulneſs, and were admitted to the poſſeſſion of the moſt valuable privileges; and therefore,

They ſhall be glad for them, &c. For the divine judgments that were executed upon Edom. The words import, that they were to feel vehement joyful emotions of mind, which would be expreſſed in their converſation and conduct, becauſe the Almighty had manifeſted his righteouſneſs and veracity, in the overthrow of their enemies, and demonſtrated his diſtinguiſhing favour toward his people. Their joy was not to proceed from a rancorous revengeful diſpoſition (which they deteſted), but from ardent love to the divine glory, diſplayed in the deſtruction of the enemies of his ſervants, by whom they had been cruelly haraſſed and perſecuted. It was the proper effect of their deliverance from that ſuperſtition and oppreſſion, of which theſe people had been the chief ſupporters; and of a way being opened for the enjoyment of liberty and the knowledge of the truth. 'The righteous ſhall rejoice (ſaith the royal 'Pſalmiſt) when he ſeeth the vengeance*' of Jehovah, which ſometimes burſts forth like a thunder ſtorm, and ſweeps away at once, in the height of their proſperity, the implacable adverſaries of the people of God. On this account the ſaints are invited to rejoice over the deſtruction of myſtical Babylon†. And here it is foretold, that for a ſimilar reaſon they ſhould extol the Lord and celebrate his praiſes.

And bloſſom as the roſe. Nothing can be more graceful and elegant than this expreſſion. The cover of the roſe being ſwelled and opened, this lovely flower expands, enlarges in ſize, and diſplays attractive beauty. Tinted with the ſtrongeſt, richeſt colours, it exhibits the moſt pleaſant aſpect, it diffuſes the moſt delightful flavour, and ſo is admirably ſuited to repreſent the flouriſhing ſtate of the church of God. The roſe juſt burſt forth from the cover in which it was incloſed, aſſuming the moſt pleaſant appearance, and yielding the moſt fragrant ſmell, conveys a lively image of the church, revived

* Pſal. lviii. 10. † Rev. xviii. 20.

ved and invigorated by the Holy Spirit, with new life, beauty, and ſtrength. A more amiable grateful object cannot be preſented to view than the people of God, who, after having been in a wilderneſs-like ſtate, put on the beauties of holineſs, who, on account of their ſplendor, are compared to the celeſtial luminaries, for comelineſs to the moſt glorious ſtructures, the choiceſt ornaments, and the loveliest flowers in the garden. The ſweet ſmell of the roſe gives a very faint idea of the far more exhilerating perfume, which ariſes from the freſh unction of the Holy Spirit, and the ſweet ſavour of the knowledge of Chriſt, when grace is poured into the lips, when wiſdom enters into the heart, when much incenſe aſcends on high with prayers, when the ſacrifices of righteouſneſs and of doing good, are continually offered, and edifying converſation miniſters grace to the hearers. In ſuch a proſperous ſtate doth the church, as here foretold, bloſſom as a roſe.—Senſible that the influences of heaven are abſolutely neceſſary to the enjoyment of this happy condition, let us earneſtly requeſt of God, that he will be pleaſed to grant us refreſhing communications of divine grace, to revive us in the midſt of theſe years, that we may be glad and rejoice in him, and by fruitfulneſs in every good work may ſhew forth his praiſe.

2 It ſhall bloſſom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and ſinging: the glory of Lebanon ſhall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they ſhall ſee the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God.

Theſe words contain a fine illuſtration of the pleaſant ſubject introduced in the former verſe.—Bloſſoms, you know, are the beautiful flowers wherewith trees and ſhrubs are cloathed in the ſpring, which give the agreeable proſpect of plentiful fruit in due ſeaſon. Theſe bloſſoms which, according to the order of nature, precede the fruit that afterward ripens into maturity, may ſignify the very agreeable joyful appearance

appearance which on this occaſion the church was to aſſume, of ſound convictions of ſin, of divine illumination and the knowledge of ſacred truths, accompanied with unfeigned return to God as their portion, and to his ſervice as their employment. Theſe things, which are truly comely and deſirable, were to ſhew themſelves in large abundance in the proſperous period here foretold, as preludes to the moſt valuable attainments and ſignal ſervices.—Beſides, ſuch was to be at this time their felicity and joy, that our Prophet, having expreſſed his views in language not ſufficiently ſtrong, returns to the ſubject, and affirms, that upright men—*ſhall rejoice with joy and ſinging*. They ſhall exult and triumph with the greateſt gladneſs; one act of exultation ſhall ſucceed another, which ſhall not ſoon be terminated, the cauſes and grounds of it being real and permanent. And this joy ſhall ariſe to a vaſt height, and be expreſſed by ſinging ſongs of praiſe to the God of ſalvation.

The glory of Lebanon ſhall be given unto it, &c. Among the mountains of Paleſtine, the moſt remarkable and the moſt celebrated, are mount Lebanon and mount Carmel. The glory of the former, well known for its magnitude and height, conſiſted in the abundance of lofty wide ſpreading cedars, and other ſorts of trees wherewith it was covered, which exhibited a ſtriking appearance of ſtrength, majeſty, and grandeur. The excellency of the latter lay in its riches and fertility, being cloathed with luxuriant corns, with vines, olives, and delicious fruits, it diſplayed peculiar beauty, grace, and fruitfulneſs. The excellency of the valley or country of Sharon conſiſted in the fertile fields, the large flocks, the rich paſturage, the fine flowers and fruits wherewith it abounded, and which rendered it exquiſitely beautiful. Indeed the united excellencies of all the creatures, are inſufficient to adumbrate the glories of the church, which are doubtleſs here intended by this aſſemblage of images collected from the moſt magnificent and beautiful objects in nature. The former

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of theſe metaphorical expreſſions may ſignify that the church, at the period to which our Prophet looked forward, was to be adorned with men of eminent gifts and graces, diſtinguiſhed for their attainments in the ſpiritual life, for the ſtability of their faith, their excellent piety, and extenſive virtues.—That they were to be honoured with faithful paſtors, renowned teachers, and good princes, who were to be remarkable for firm attachment to true piety and ſound doctrine. Theſe, in their ſeveral ſtations, were to exhibit a ſplendid appearance of grandeur like unto Lebanon. The latter of theſe rhetorical figures may denote, that the people of God were to be greatly felicitated by the rich ſtores of pleaſant ſpiritual proviſion of every ſort, whereby they were nouriſhed and ſolaced. They were to enjoy in high perfection the ſacred truths contained in the holy ſcriptures, the miniſtry of the word, and the divine repaſt of the Lord's ſupper, joined with a lively ſenſe of the mercy and grace therein mentioned.—Perhaps ſome of you perceive not the propriety and dignity of the ideas, which are here ſubſtituted for thoſe I have now ſuggeſted. Take into view, not only the general elegance and ſublimity of theſe figures, but conſider how forcible they muſt have appeared to thoſe for whom they were originally intended; what a connection and agreement they muſt have had with their circumſtances, feelings, and opinions; and they will ſeem graceful and beautiful. And learn to admire the Spirit of prophecy, who introduces familiar images furniſhed by the ſenſes, to depict the obſcure by the more viſible, and things ſpiritual by thoſe which are ſeen and temporal.

They ſhall ſee the glory of the Lord, &c. Glory is the luſtre of what is excellent, the excellency of what is ſplendid; or real worth rendered highly conſpicuous. The glory of Jehovah, and the excellency of our God, may be conſidered as ſynonimous terms; denoting the magnificent diſplays which were to be given of the divine attributes, in executing righteous

judgments upon the enemies of his ſervants, and in vouchſafing to take up his gracious reſidence among them. Jehovah is infinitely glorious and excellent in his exiſtence, which is independent, unchangeable, perfect, and eternal—in his perfections, ſuch as wiſdom, power, goodneſs, holineſs, juſtice, and mercy, and—in his works of creation, of providence, and eſpecially of grace. This glory, this excellency of our God, whoſe we are, and whom we ſerve, ſhines with the brighteſt effulgence in the face of Jeſus Chriſt; and is beheld with the higheſt advantage in the glaſs of the goſpel.—This glory the church (even thoſe who were once like the deſart) ſhall ſee. They ſhall be favoured, not merely with a ſuperficial glance of it; but they ſhall ſteadily and delightfully contemplate it, ſhining with noon-day ſtrength and brightneſs, until they are transformed and ſatisfied. They ſhall ſee it manifeſted in delivering them from the greateſt evils, in extricating them from the moſt preſſing difficulties, in ſupporting them under the heavieſt trials, and in conferring upon them the moſt ſubſtantial bleſſings. Delightful privilege! which, though enjoyed in ſome meaſure by the people of God in every age, was to be attained in a high degree at the period wherein God was to manifeſt his preſence with them by the diſpenſations of his providence, and the communications of his grace. —Senſible of the ineſtimable value of this promiſed bleſſing, let us adopt the words of the king of Iſrael, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I ſeek thee; 'my ſoul thirſteth for thee; my fleſh longeth for 'thee—to ſee thy power and thy glory *.'

3 ¶ Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

This verſe, and the one which immediately follows, contains a pathetic exhortation addreſſed to the faithful ſervants of God, directing them to adminiſter

* Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2.

ſter conſolation to their weak dejected brethren, by the aſſurance of recompenſe and ſalvation.—The hands, which are the inſtruments of action, may here denote the operative faculties of the ſoul, which are employed in performing the ſpiritual functions of renewed men, and the various duties incumbent upon them. Theſe powers may be ſaid to be languid and feeble, when, through negligence, remiſſneſs, and other cauſes; ſuch as long continued temporal proſperity, the remaining influence of corruption, diſappointments in the courſe of providence, contentions, reproaches, and afflictions; they are ſeldom put forth into action, and become incapable of neceſſary vigorous exertion. Perſons in this weak ſtate, who are apt to give way to indolence, to timidity, and dejection, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, vouchſafes particularly to regard. He who himſelf giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might increaſeth ſtrength, requires his ſervants to do whatever lies within their compaſs, by forcible arguments, cogent reaſons, and animating examples, to ſtrengthen them, and excite them to activity and ſtrenuous endeavours. Of theſe there is plentiful ſtore always ready for uſe in the ſcripture of truth, from whence they ought to be ſeaſonably brought forth for the encouragement of the timid and the feeble. And that they may prove effectual for reſtoring to ſtrength and vigour the weak and infirm, and furniſhing them for every good work, they muſt be addreſſed to them in dependence on the powerful bleſſing of the Moſt High, without which they can never operate to any valuable purpoſe.—*Confirm the feeble knees.* The knees, which are the inſtruments or means of motion, whereby we go from one place to another, may ſignify thoſe divine graces whereby upright men are enabled to ſtand faſt in the faith, and to run in the way of God's commandments. Theſe graces, ſuch as faith and hope, become feeble, when through fear, dejection, and various ſpiritual diſtempers, they loſe their firmneſs, and prove inſufficient to ſupport under

der deſpondency, and to ſurmount the difficulties that lie in the way to the heavenly Zion. Perſons in this debilitated ſtate are to be ſuccoured, ſtrengthened, and eſtabliſhed. When their faith and hope ſeems to yield, to bend, or ſhake, they muſt be aſſiſted and ſupported, that they may be preſerved from falling; and helped to go in the way of God's precepts. Powerful aſſiſtance muſt be given from the word of God, to hold them up under the aſſaults of temptation, and to prevent them from ſuccumbing under the preſſure of affliction. From a ſenſe of duty, and with tender ſympathy, ſpeak comfortably to the feeble minded, encourage them to activity in the ſervice of God, to fortitude in every enterprize, to patience in every diſtreſs, to perſeverance in every good work.—What happy effects may reſult from attempts of this ſort, which good men are here directed to make. The friends of upright Job were conſtrained to acknowledge, that he had ſtrengthened weak hands and feeble knees. His words had been well choſen, and fitly ſpoken in ſeaſon, ſo that by the divine bleſſing they produced theſe noble effects. They did wonders, they cheered the dejected, they inſpired courage into the deſponding, they conveyed ſinews and ſtrength to thoſe who were infirm and ready to fall. May the words now ſpoken, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, be accompanied with ſimilar effects to you, who are feeble and debilitated.

4 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be ſtrong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with a* recompence: he will come and ſave you.

Ye miniſters of the word, to whom is committed the care of the people, ye whoſe duty is to exhort one another daily, and to comfort each other, inſtruct and admoniſh thoſe who are of a timid diſpoſition, or, as the Hebrew word is rendered in the margin of ſome bibles, thoſe who are of a haſty ſpirit. Perſons of

of this deſcription have a peculiar claim to your attention and compaſſion. Whilſt you prudently endeavour to awaken the proud, the vain, and the ſelf-confident, by reminding them of the awful vengeance of heaven denounced againſt them, you ought to encourage the fearful and puſillanimous, who are diſtreſſed with diſquieting anxieties, as to the difficulties and dangers, that ſeem to lie in the way of the accompliſhment of God's promiſes. Thoſe, alſo, who are raſh and precipitate, who are apt to exclaim in the divine preſence, we are cut off from before thine eyes, and to adopt improper meaſures to obtain relief; exhort to maintain inward ſerenity and compoſure of mind, and to wait upon God with patience, and hope for the predicted events of his providence, and the accompliſhment of his faithful promiſes. Say to them—*Be ſtrong*, and very courageous. Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Your ſtrength and comfort is not the work of your own hands, nor an acquiſition made by your own purchaſe; they can be found only in God the Lord. Fortify yourſelves, then, in the high tower of the divine omnipotence, and labour to have the Almighty engaged in your aſſiſtance and defence. 'Wait upon 'the Lord, be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen 'thine heart; wait, I ſay upon the Lord.'—*Fear not*, nor be diſmayed by the ſpiritual enemies with whom you may have to contend; for greater is he that is in you, than all thoſe that are againſt you. Fear none of theſe things that you may have to ſuffer, whether poverty or reproach, diſtreſs or diſſolution; only be faithful to death, and the Son of God will give you a crown of life.

Behold, your God will come, &c. Attentively conſider, in the exerciſe of faith and hope, that he who is your God, your Creator and Preſerver, your Father and Friend, the Avenger of the injuries you received, and your Deliverer—That he who hath given you the explicit aſſurance that he ſtands connected with you in the moſt intimate endearing relations; and

to whom you have ſolemnly ſaid, 'Thou art our 'ſure portion which we have choſen, O Lord.'—That this ſupreme arbiter and judge will come to execute righteous vengeance on thoſe that have wronged and oppreſſed you, and to recompenſe their crimes. Having ſpoken from the 8th verſe of the preceding chapter, of the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences, I will not ſay more at preſent on this topic.—Conſider eſpecially that *he will come and ſave you.* As the Prophet doth not ſpecify the time, the manner, or the place of this advent, the words may be applied to the ſeveral ways wherein, according to prophecy, God was to exhibit an illuſtrious appearance of his preſence and glory. Behold, your God will come and ſave you. He will come, in the courſe of his Providence, that by his ſignal interpoſition, he may deliver you from the many calamities you have ſuſtained, and that he may confer upon you the moſt important benefits. He will come in the fulneſs of time, in the perſon of the great Redeemer, to turn away ungodlineſs from Jacob, and to obtain ſalvation for Iſrael. He will come, according to his promiſe, by his Spirit, which he will put within you, and cauſe you to walk in his ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep his judgments and do them. And he will come to execute righteous judgment upon all, when he ſhall call to the heavens and to the earth, that he may judge his people, and conſummate the everlaſting ſalvation of the church.—Come, bleſſed God, and grant us that ſalvation which cannot be had, either from angels or men, but from thee alone. Save us from temptation, from ſin, from trouble and death; that with this delightful proſpect fully in view, we may ſtrengthen weak hands, and confirm feeble knees, and may ſay with effect to them that are of fearful heart, Be ſtrong.

5 Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped.

Our

Our Prophet proceeds to ſpecify the glorious ſpiritual prerogatives to be enjoyed by the church at the period which he now delineates. The firſt which he mentions is a clear perception of the truths and ways of God.—*Then* may refer to the memorable æra wherein the Son of God came in his Father's name to ſave men, when among the many ſtupendous miracles he performed, he literally gave ſight to the blind*. By ſuch aſtoniſhing acts of power and grace, he diſplayed benevolence and tender compaſſion, he gave the moſt convincing proofs of his divine miſſion, he exhibited ſtriking images of the ſpiritual benefits he would confer upon men, by wonderfully removing their ignorance, and furniſhing them with capacity to perceive, underſtand, and diſcriminate ſpiritual objects, as did the diſciples after their underſtandings were opened. Or it may refer, not to the time wherein God was manifeſt in the fleſh, but to the period in which the vengeance of the Almighty was to be conſpicuouſly executed upon the enemies of the church; and he was remarkably to interpoſe for the deliverance of his people from thraldom and oppreſſion. Then was Jehovah to exhibit ſuch illuſtrious proofs of his power and preſence, as were to vanquiſh the moſt ſtubborn incredulity, and to open the eyes of mens minds to diſcern divine truths. Their underſtandings were to be opened to perceive the reality, beauty, and excellence of eternal things, who had formerly been blinded by errors and prejudices, and had neglected to attend to their beſt intereſts. Their minds which had been darkened by ignorance and corrupt paſſions, were to be illuminated to behold the glory of the Lord revealed by his word and providence.

And the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped. At the time the Son of God appeared on this earth in the faſhion of a man, this prediction was literally fulfilled, with the other juſt now conſidered. Some memorable inſtances are recorded by the Evangeliſts.

* See Matth. xi.—Mark ix.—John viii.

liſts *. Theſe wonders of mercy, whereby hearing was imparted to the deaf, afforded a ſtriking repreſentation of the ſtill nobler diſplays of grace, when God comes by his Spirit to render men partakers of his ſalvation. Then he not only enlightens their underſtandings, but he gives them ears to hear †. He opens their ears to diſcipline, and ſeals their inſtruction; he opens their hearts to attend diligently to the things that are ſpoken concerning ſalvation.—In conſequence whereof, they who hearkened not to the joyful ſound of mercy and truth, liſten with eager attention to the ſalutary doctrines of the goſpel; which they receive in the faith and love of them, that they may profit their ſouls. Delighted with the diſcoveries which they contain, they meditate upon them with pleaſure, diſpoſed to yield cheerful obedience to the will of God.—Theſe ineſtimable benefits, frequently promiſed in ſcripture, were to be diſpenſed in great meaſure at the period to which this prophecy refers. When God is pleaſed to come to ſave his people, he beſtows upon them a more clear and extenſive acquaintance, a more full and diſtinct knowledge of his truths and ways; and thus verifies his faithful promiſes, manifeſts his rich grace, and abundantly recompenſes the induſtry of his people.—'Lord, open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous 'things out of thy law.' In reading the Old and New Teſtaments, take away the vail of ignorance, corrupt affections and prejudices; and give us a clear, affecting, transforming diſcovery of the truths of thy holy word. Lord, do thou unſtop our ears, take away our unbelief, pride, and impenitence; our love to ſin and the world, which would ſhut our ears againſt ſacred inſtruction. Grant us ears to hearken to thy teſtimonies with attention and faith, with underſtanding and prompt obedience, that our ſouls may live, and we may keep thy precepts.

6 Then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, and

* See Mark vii. and ix. † Deut. xxix. 4.

and the tongue of the dumb ſing: for in the wilderneſs ſhall waters break out, and ſtreams in the deſart.

Alacrity in performing ſpiritual duties is mentioned as another privilege to be enjoyed by the church. —In the ſpiritual, as in the natural world, it often happens that one diſtemper is intimately connected with another; and that ſome perſons labour under a complication of diſorders or weakneſſes, which prevent them from the active performance of duty. Some are blind and deaf, ſome are lame or dumb. Perſons of all theſe claſſes of diſtreſſed people were cured by the Son of God, when he came into this world to ſave them that were loſt. Among others, ſome that had not the uſe of their limbs experienced his healing power. A ſtriking inſtance of this ſort is recorded as a ſpecimen in the 5th chapter of John, where we read, that at the command of Jeſus Chriſt, a man who had been infirm, (I ſuppoſe lame) for thirty-eight years, aroſe, took up his bed, and walked. Of another it is written *, that his feet and ancle bones received ſtrength, when the apoſtle Peter, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, deſired him to riſe up and walk; ſo that, leaping up, he ſtood, he walked, and leaped like a hart, that is exceeding ſwift in his motions, and bounds over the fields with the greateſt velocity. In this manner the prediction was literally fulfilled, whilſt the tender mercy and omnipotence of the Saviour were glorioufly manifeſted. And when God comes actually to convey his ſalvation to men, he removes their ſpiritual lameneſs, which renders them uneven in their conduct, ſometimes inclining to one ſide, and ſometimes to another; or which altogether diſables them from upright walking in the way of God's precepts. He invigorates and communicates new ſtrength to their affections and other faculties, which had been greatly enfeebled or miſplaced, and cauſes them to run in the paths

* Acts iii. 1. *et ſeq.*

of his commandments, with ſuch alacrity, firmneſs, and joy, as fully verifies the words we have been conſidering.

And the tongue of the dumb ſhall ſing. Another wonderful work of divine power and compaſſion is here mentioned, whereby the happy period of which our Prophet ſpeaks was to be diſtinguiſhed. Thoſe who were deſtitute of the faculty of ſpeech, and incapable of articulating a word, were to have this noble privilege conferred upon them; in conſequence of which they would celebrate, with gratitude and joy, the praiſes of their generous benefactor. Several inſtances of this ſort, whereby this prediction was literally fulfilled, are recorded in the goſpels, to have been wrought by God manifeſt in the fleſh *. 'Inſomuch that the people were beyond 'meaſure aſtoniſhed, ſaying, He hath done all things 'well; he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb 'to ſpeak †.' Such rich diſplays of almighty power, ſuch miracles of mercy, were juſtly admired and highly extolled by thoſe who were witneſſes of them. Theſe aſtoniſhing cures, whereby this prophecy was literally fulfilled, ſignificantly repreſented the ſtill more wonderful works of God, when he comes actually to make men partakers of his ſalvation, whereby it receives a full accompliſhment. Such is the miſerable condition of mankind, that through ſenſual affections, incredulity, and obduracy of heart, they are inſenſible of the excellence of ſpiritual benefits, and divine truths; they ſpeak not a word on theſe important topics. Ignorant of their tranſcendent worth, and indifferent to ſubjects of this nature, they are ſilent reſpecting them, and hold their peace, ſenſibly feeling thoſe powerful reſtraints of which they cannot diveſt themſelves. To remove this, with other ſpiritual defects wherewith ſin hath afflicted the human race, He whoſe work is perfect, looſes the tongues, and opens the mouths of thoſe who were incapable of declaring his wonderful works, to

* See Mat. ix. 32. chap. xv. 30. † Mark. vii. 37.

to ſhew forth his praiſes, to utter the memory of his great goodneſs, and to relate his righteouſneſs. Delivering them from formality, hypocriſy, ignorance, and incredulity, he diſpoſes them with the mouth to make confeſſion unto ſalvation.—Do thou, for whom all things are poſſible, cure us of our ſpiritual infirmities, impart to us that renewed vigour which is neceſſary to our ſerving thee with pleaſure and promptitude. O Lord, we beſeech thee to open our lips, and our mouths ſhall ſhew forth thy praiſe; grant us daily freſh matter of gratitude, and furniſh us with ſpiritual abilities for celebrating thy praiſes; then ſhall we ſing of thy righteouſneſs and ſalvation all the day. Hear theſe humble requeſts for thy great name's ſake, and in thy faithfulneſs anſwer us.

For in the wilderneſs ſhall waters break out, &c. The third benefit here promiſed, is the extenſive communication of divine influences throughout the world. In this prediction, we have a new ſpecimen of the aſtoniſhing alteration of the face of nature, as the image of a ſtill more glorious ſpiritual change that ſhould be made in the ſtate of the moral world.—The howling wilderneſs, the parched ſandy deſart, which is again introduced, may denote the various nations from among whom the church is collected. In their natural ſtate, like a waſte uncultivated country, they were in a forlorn deſolate condition, deſtitute of the influences of the Holy Spirit, of the peculiar care of Providence, and the fruits of righteouſneſs.—In this dry barren ſtate, the Prophet foretels 'waters ſhall break out,' &c. Under theſe well-known beautiful emblems, the exuberance of ſpiritual bleſſings are doubtleſs intended, from whence the people of God were to receive abundant ſatisfaction and conſolation. The waters that were to break out, and the ſtream by which they were to be conveyed through the deſart, ſeem intended to ſignify, that among thoſe engroſſed by ſuperſtition, and ignorant of true religion, the ordinances of the goſpel, accompanied with the graces and comforts of the Ho-

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ly Spirit, were to be diſpenſed—That renowned teachers, qualified by the Spirit, and well acquainted with the word and ways of God, from the rich ſtores of ſacred truth, as from an inexhauſtible fountain, were to diſperſe for the public benefit, the refreſhing doctrines they contain—That theſe were to be conveyed in ſuch plenty, and with ſuch effect, that the fruits of their ſtudies and labours ſhould extend far and wide, like the ſtreams that flow along the deſart. This interpretation accords with the emblematical deſcriptions uſed in ſcripture, where the wilderneſs denotes thoſe countries that do not enjoy the ſalutary inſtructions and reviving conſolations of the word and Spirit of God, where teachers are ſpoken of as the fountains from whence flow the pleaſant fructifying comforting ſtreams of divine truth, which ſerve for the purification and refreſhment of the church *.

7 And the parched ground ſhall become a pool, and the thirſty land ſprings of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *ſhall be* graſs, with reeds and ruſhes.

The ſubject introduced in the latter part of the preceding verſe is here illuſtrated and amplified. The ground that was dry and ſcorched with ſevere drought, where every thing had an unpromiſing diſmal aſpect, exhibits an inſtructive figure (as doth the wilderneſs) of a deſolate, uncultivated, barren people, who bring forth no ſpiritual fruits unto perfection. Of perſons in this deplorable ſtate, Iſaiah declares that they ſhall become a pool and ſprings of water. A pool, which contains a collection of waters or ſprings, from whence ſtreams copiouſly flow, may figuratively denote, that at the time referred to, divine knowledge ſhould be collected in great abundance into certain places deſigned for that purpoſe—That pious, learned men, teachers of the word of God, and the ſciences which promote acquaintance

* See Pſal. lxxxvii. 7. and Rev. viii. 10.

quaintance with the ſacred oracles, were to aſſociate together in ſchools and ſeminaries of learning, to convey inſtruction in the theory and practice of theology, to thoſe who reſorted thither for their improvement. In countries where ſacred truths were little if at all known, and where their ſalutary influence had not been felt, good men, ſkilled in literature, were to unite their efforts, to teach the youth the doctrines and ways of God our Saviour.

In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, &c. Dragons are ſaid to be a fiery poiſonous ſpecies of ſerpents, which frequent dry, barren, ſolitary places, and there take up their reſidence. This ſort of animals afford a ſtriking emblem of thoſe who, inſtigated by malice and envy, are virulent perſecutors of the church, who are often found in places uncultivated by the word of God, and deſtitute of the influences of his grace. In the ſteril waſte places where theſe dragons haunted, were to grow graſs, reeds and ruſhes; the luxuriant produce which grew on the fertile banks of the rivers and lakes in the land of Egypt. This verdant herbage exhibited a pleaſant image of the delightful proſpect that was to be opened by the fulfilment of the foregoing predictions. In thoſe kingdoms and cities, wherein reſided the virulent perſecutors of the ſervants of God, where idolatry, ſuperſtition, and all manner of impurity abounded, churches and places of public inſtruction were to be erected, and occupied by men eminent for piety and learning, who ſhould be employed in teaching the way of God in truth. Error and vice were not only in great meaſure to be exterminated, but the ſalutary influence of the gifts and graces of the Spirit was to be conſpicuous in the rich increaſe of excellent uſeful men, who were to manifeſt, by their rapid progreſs in knowledge, and in every virtue, the vigour of the ſpiritual life, and the power of true Chriſtianity.—Such was the viſible change effected by the glorious goſpel of the Son of God; ſuch was the pleaſant aſpect of the Chriſtian church in the firſt period

of

of its exiſtence, when the attractive beauty and rapid growth of the early diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt exhibited a moſt delightful proſpect. Such ſhall be the happy alteration which ſhall be accompliſhed at the expected æra, when the fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in, and the nations of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt. For this bleſſed event, let us daily hope and pray.

8 And an highway ſhall be there, and a way, and it ſhall be called The way of holineſs; the unclean ſhall not paſs over it; but it *ſhall be* for thoſe: the wayfaring men, tho' fools, ſhall not err *therein*.

Another important benefit to be enjoyed by the church, is eminent purity in faith and practice. The way of life, the rule according to which the Iſrael of God was to walk, ſhould at this time be ſo clearly explained and underſtood, that the more ſimple illiterate lovers of the truth, were not to depart from the direction it conveyed. There are three things which render travelling through a deſart inconvenient and dangerous; namely, deficiency of water, the want of proper roads, and the fury of wild beaſts. In the prophecy before us, ample proviſion is made againſt each of theſe evils. Having foretold that waters ſhould break out in the wilderneſs, to refreſh the thirſty traveller, our Prophet declares, *An highway ſhall be there*, &c. This article, like the other parts of this prediction, muſt not be underſtood in the literal, but in the allegorical ſenſe. A well-formed patent ſmooth road, may denote the way of faith and holineſs, which was to be ſo fully laid open to public view at the time referred to, that none of thoſe who entered upon it ſhould be apt to wander through ignorance. The highway here mentioned may ſignify the word of God, which clearly points out the faith, the worſhip, and the obedience to be yielded by the church to their Saviour and Lord; which teaches to order

order their ſteps aright, and leads them onward to the land of uprightneſs. This highway, by its name and properties, is diſtinguiſhed from the many by-paths which men have found out, in the proſecution of their amuſement and pleaſure, that are daily frequented by multitudes. Whereas this way to be opened in the wilderneſs of the Gentile nations, for the benefit of thoſe who are going toward Zion, is plain, direct, perfectly ſafe and agreeable; ſo that no perſon acquainted with it need to go aſtray. According to this rule of conduct, which ſhews what is to be avoided, believed, and performed, the redeemed from among men ſhall frame their ſentiments and actions, and go forward from ſtrength to ſtrength, until they appear perfect before God.

It ſhall be called the way of holineſs. By this honourable appellation it is well known from all other ways. Holineſs conſiſts in reſemblance to the immaculate purity of Jehovah, in conformity to the complete revelation given of his bleſſed will. The way marked out for the upright juſtly deſerves this name, as it lies in the exerciſe of every divine grace; ſuch as faith and love, reverence, confidence, hope, and joy, which terminate upon God; and in the practice of thoſe holy duties which have immediate reſpect to him in the various characters and relations in which he ſtands connected with his people.—It conſiſts in univerſal ſanctity of heart and life, which are indiſpenſibly requiſite, that we may arrive at the enjoyment of God; and in the practice of all thoſe duties which are due to men in their ſeveral capacities and ſtations. This way of holineſs requires a principle of ſpiritual life in thoſe who walk in it; that they may be habitually diſpoſed and enabled to perform all the acts of piety, righteouſneſs, and temperance incumbent upon them. Progreſs in this way is the peculiar prerogative of the ſervants of God, who preſs forward in their journey toward the inheritance of the ſaints in light. In the exerciſes of obedience, they ſtudiouſly endeavour to be holy as the Lord

Lord our God is holy; they demonſtrate profound ſubjection to his ſupreme authority, at all times, in all places, in all ſocieties, and on all occaſions. This is the way, the good old way, in which they find reſt to their ſouls. In this way they worſhip the God of their fathers; they act with fidelity toward their brethren; they cultivate purity in heart, and all manner of converſation. It is therefore emphatically denominated the way of holineſs, and elſewhere the way of God's commandments, in which they are undefiled, and wherein they experience true bleſſedneſs.

The unclean ſhall not paſs over it; but it ſhall be for thoſe. This highway is appropriated to the ſaints. Thoſe who are of impure minds and manners, who are not cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs, effectually exclude themſelves from the way of holineſs. Averſe to the holy law of God, the reſtraints it impoſes, and the univerſal ſanctity it requires, they decline to tread in thoſe paths which are diametrically oppoſite to their inclinations and deſigns. They inquire not the way to Zion with their faces thitherward; they walk not in the law of the Lord.—Such was to be the happineſs of the church at this period, that they were not to be diſturbed by diſagreeable intercourſe with perſons of the above deſcription. According to the prediction delivered chap. lii. 1. of this prophecy, 'there ſhall no more come unto thee the uncircum-'ciſed and the unclean; thy people ſhall be all righ-'teous.' To render the expreſſion more emphatical, our Prophet adds, 'But it ſhall be for thoſe.' The way of holineſs ſhall be the excluſive privilege of the perſons ſpoken of in the 5th and 6th verſes of this chapter, whoſe ſpiritual wants and diſorders had been relieved, who had their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil, and who are ſpoken of, ver. 10. as the ranſomed of the Lord, who ſhall return and come to Zion.—People of an oppoſite character, who have not entered upon the way of holineſs, ought to have immediate recourſe to the fountain opened

opened to the houſe of David and to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, for ſin and for uncleanneſs; that being waſhed therein from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, they may perfect holineſs in the fear of God.

The wayfaring men, tho' fools, ſhall not err therein. Leſt it might have been ſuppoſed or ſuſpected that fooliſh and ſimple people, who are leſs conſiderate and prudent than others, might wander from the way of truth and holineſs, Iſaiah explicitly declares, that wayfaring men or travellers in this road, however weak and deficient in wiſdom and natural abilities, ſhall not fatally err nor fall from their own ſtedfaſtneſs. With ſuch clearneſs and evidence were divine truths to be accompanied, with ſuch divine efficacy were they to operate, through the Spirit of power, even on the feebleſt minds, as to preſerve them from wickedly departing from the Lord their God. The expreſſion does not intimate that they were to become infallible, and free from pernicious miſtakes; but that they ſhall not utterly go aſtray into deſtructive courſes; that, having choſen the way of God's precepts, they ſhall obſerve them with their whole heart even unto the end. Having entered upon the highway of the King of kings, the way of holineſs, though extremely feeble and prone to err, they are out of danger, (if I may uſe the phraſe) *i. e.* they are under the conduct and protection of our Almighty Sovereign, and have the promiſe of the defence of the Rock of ages. Their preſervation depends not on their own ſtrength, but on divine omnipotence. How animating the conſideration! The moſt ſimple ſervants of God ſhall not be permitted totally to deſert the way of righteouſneſs; they ſhall be kept from falling, or recovered from their wanderings, by the mighty power of God. 'The 'Lord ſhall deliver them from every evil work, and 'will preſerve them unto his heavenly kingdom; to 'whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen *.'

9 No lion ſhall be there, nor *any* ravenous

* 2 Tim. iv. 18.

beaſt ſhall go up thereon; it ſhall not be found there, but the redeemed ſhall walk *there*.

Deſirable ſecurity, and freedom from cruel powerful perſecutors, are foretold to be enjoyed by the church, at the happy period here deſcribed.—People who are not in danger of miſtaking or loſing their road, may be expoſed to the attacks of ſome ferocious animals that frequent the deſart, by whom they may be greatly injured or deſtroyed. To obviate this difficulty, that to ſome might have proved very diſtreſſing, the Prophet aſſerts, that in the way whereof he was ſpeaking, people may walk without dread or terror.—The lion and the ravenous beaſt, are to be underſtood in this paſſage, not literally, but ſymbollically, denoting inſolent ferocious tyrants, who are inimical to the tranquillity and ſafety of the people of God. A ſtriking inſtance of this kind of imagery, in the uſe of which the ſacred writers cannot be accuſed of any deficiency of perſpicuity and elegance, occurs in the 10th Pſalm, where the inſpired poet is delineating the character of the wicked, who, through pride of countenance, ſeeketh not after God. 'He lieth ' (ſaith he) in ambuſh to deſtroy the innocent; he ' lieth ſecretly in wait to catch the poor, as a lion in ' his den.' The banks of the river Jordan are ſaid to have been infeſted with lions and other ravenous beaſts; and from the reeds and deep ſedge that grew in that vicinity, where they lay concealed, they ruſhed out to ſeize upon travellers. This circumſtance, well known to the Hebrews, rendered journeying extremely dangerous in their country; and from hence is derived the familiar image in the verſe before us. The words import, that at the time this prediction was to be fulfilled, the votaries of true religion, who formed their life and manners according to the word of God, were to be happily relieved from the fear of violent perſecution, from thoſe fierce and powerful enemies whom the evil one ſtirs up to annoy the ſaints of the Moſt High. Cruel perſecutors, who haraſs

raſs and vex the confeſſors of the truth, and ſometimes thirſt for their blood, ſhould not then give them any diſturbance. Perſons of this character were entirely to diſappear, ſo that none of them could be found.

But the redeemed ſhall walk there. Our Prophet, having foretold that the travellers to Zion were to be furniſhed with abundance of water and a patent road, and to be ſafe from rapacity and violence, declares that the way of holineſs was to be occupied by the redeemed. This deſignation may allude to the important benefit anciently conferred upon the poſterity of Jacob, when, by the outſtretched arm of Jehovah, they were delivered from the power of Pharaoh, and from hard bondage in Egypt, and that not without the price of blood. The deſcription plainly intimates, in the ſcripture ſenſe of the word, that the people ſpoken of had been alienated from their rightful proprietor; that they had been reduced to a ſtate of captivity and bondage, from which with great difficulty they were delivered.—That by the kind and ſeaſonable interpoſition of ſome generous, powerful friend, they had been reſcued from miſery, and reſtored to liberty, in conſequence of ſome valuable conſideration, or coſtly price laid down, and the exertion of a power ſuperior to that whereby they were enſlaved. In conſiſtency with the expoſition given of the former part of this prophecy, the redemption here intended ſeems plainly to be that which is ſpiritual, and peculiar to thoſe who ſhall appear before God in the heavenly Zion. The fact is: Having ſold themſelves for nought, and become ſervants of ſin, having alſo forfeited their inheritance, none of them could by any means redeem himſelf or his brother, or give to God a ſufficient ranſom. The redemption of the ſoul being precious, on their part ceaſed for ever. In this forlorn ſtate, the Son of God aſſumed human nature, and gave himſelf for them, to redeem them from the curſe they deſerved, from all iniquity, and the hands of all their enemies; and to

reſtore

reſtore them to the glorious liberty of the children of God. In conſequence whereof, they are ſaid to have redemption through his blood. Having proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the priſon to them that are bound, and happily diſpoſed and enabled them to accept of the offered benefit, they became his redeemed. Deeply ſenſible of their infinite obligations to their gracious Redeemer, and of their indiſpenſible duty, they walk in the way of holineſs, ſtudying to act with integrity and fidelity in every ſtation that they occupy.—Let this be your employment who are redeemed from among men. If you are huſbandmen, endeavour to manage your affairs with diſcretion. If you are tradeſmen, be diligent in buſineſs, upright, and faithful. If you are engaged in commerce, let all your tranſactions be conducted with ſtrict regard to juſtice and equity. If you are maſters, remember you have a maſter in heaven. If ſervants, ſhew all good fidelity, that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. As he who hath called you is holy, ſo be ye holy in all manner of converſation.

10 And the ranſomed of the LORD ſhall return, and come to Zion, with ſongs and everlaſting joy upon their heads: they ſhall obtain joy and gladneſs, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away.

Theſe words contain a beautiful deſcription of the conduct and felicity of the redeemed from among men; for which the period whereof the Prophet ſpeaks was to be remarkably diſtinguiſhed.—The redeemed, mentioned in the preceding verſe, are here denominated, The ranſomed of the LORD. Both characters are of the ſame import, and ſerve to diſcriminate thoſe to whom they belong from the reſt of mankind. In the one now before us there ſeems to be an obvious alluſion to the ranſom for their ſouls, which the children of Iſrael were appointed to give unto

unto the Lord, of which we read Exod. xxx. 12. *et ſeq.* It again brings into view the bondage from which they were emancipated, and the glorious liberty into which they are vindicated 'by the Son of 'man, who came into this world to give his life a ran-'ſom for many *;' 'by the man Chriſt Jeſus, who 'gave himſelf a ranſom for all †.' That this compaſſionate Redeemer might deliver them from the ſervitude of ſin and Satan, he freely and generouſly gave himſelf, ſoul and body, with his precious life, whereby theſe conſtituent parts of human nature were united. The ineſtimable benefit, then, which he confers upon thoſe whom he reſcues from thraldom, was not procured by ſuch corruptible things as ſilver and gold, as thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil; but by the precious blood of Chriſt. This chief article, this myſterious doctrine of the goſpel, which was to diſplay its glorious efficacy at the time to which the prediction relates, ought ever to be kept fully in view, as the ſure ground of faith and hope; the contemplation of which ought to excite admiration, gratitude, and praiſe 'to him 'who was ſlain, and hath redeemed us to God by 'his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and 'people, and nation ‡.'—Concerning ſuch our Prophet foretels,

They ſhall return every one from his evil ways into which he had gone aſtray, from his ways and doings that had not been good, to ſerve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jeſus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. This return ſhall be with their whole heart and ſoul. They ſhall abandon thoſe fooliſh vain thoughts wherewith their minds were formerly occupied; they ſhall renounce thoſe evil inclinations to which they were once obſtinately addicted, and thoſe criminal attachments which in time paſt they had formed.—With all their mind, with all their heart, and with all their affection, they ſhall have recourſe to God, from whom they

* Mat. xx. 28. † 1 Tim. ii. 6. ‡ Rev. v. 9, 10.

they had departed. Aware that there is a returning, but not to the Moſt High, which brings men no nearer to God than before; (for many return from one evil practice to another, as from open profanity to concealed hypocriſy,) by a thorough continued converſion they reſign themſelves and their all, to be ruled and diſpoſed of by him as ſeemeth good in his ſight. They return to God through the great Mediator, not feignedly with a divided heart, not in conſequence of tranſitory impreſſions occaſionally made by external objects; but in conſequence of a heart-affecting ſenſe of their ſin and danger, their duty and intereſt. In this manner they repair to God as their quiet reſt and all-ſufficient portion, that in him they may repoſe all their confidence, that from him they may receive the ſupply of all their neceſſities, and that in his commandments they may greatly delight themſelves.—'Thus ſaith the Lord, Return ye now 'every one from his evil way, and make your ways 'and your doings good *.'

And come to Zion, that they may participate in the privileges peculiar to the upright. Zion in this verſe, as in many other places of ſcripture, is the name uſed to ſignify the church of God. Two circumſtances fully juſtify the propriety of this deſignation. The ſociety of the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus made their firſt appearance on that mountain; there the firſt Chriſtian church was planted, and the throne of God's kingdom was erected. There the radical or mother church was eſtabliſhed; in conſequence of which, thoſe who became members of that ſacred community were ſaid to be born in Zion; and in every age, the people of God, in their collective capacity, have retained that appellation. Beſides, the ſame privileges which were anciently conferred on Zion, are enjoyed by the church under the New Teſtament. God was pleaſed to appoint that mountain to be the place of his peculiar reſidence; there he was ſolemnly worſhipped; there he met with his people, converſed

* Jer. xviii. 11.

converſed with them, made known to them his will, and afforded them protection and ſafety. Theſe prerogatives ſtill belong to the church of Chriſt, and therefore the Holy Spirit often ſpeaks of them in the prophecies, by the name of Zion. The writers of the New Teſtament frequently adopt the ſame language; of which a remarkable inſtance occurs in the 12th chapter of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, where the apoſtle affirms, that Chriſtians 'are come to mount 'Zion, and unto the city of the living God,' according to the prediction now before us.—To this honourable ſociety they were to be joined—

With ſongs and everlaſting joy upon their heads. Many things contribute to produce the exultation and joy which are here mentioned. Triumphant ſongs of praiſe were to be raiſed to God and to the Lamb, becauſe multitudes of ſins are covered, ſouls are ſaved from death, acceſſions are made to the church of God, and 'when the Lord reckoneth up the peo-'ple of Zion, it ſhall be ſaid, this and that man was 'born in her *.' Nor are theſe hymns of thankſgiving confined to the church on earth; the celeſtial inhabitants ſharing in the joy, unite in the ſongs; for there is joy in heaven even over one ſinner that repenteth. The heavenly hoſt who praiſed God at the nativity of the Saviour, will not be ſilent, we ſuppoſe, when thoſe he came to redeem are brought home to the ſhepherd and biſhop of their ſouls. It is added,—'With everlaſting joy upon their heads.' This expreſſion may allude to the ancient cuſtom of wearing crowns in ſeaſons of mirth and feſtivity, which were conſidered as marks of honour and dignity. Or it may refer to the practice of anointing the head on joyous feſtive occaſions, which probably gave riſe to the phraſe uſed by the royal poet of 'the oil of gladneſs †.' The redeemed of the Lord, furniſhed with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, were to haſten with ſublime pleaſure and joy to participate in the communion of ſaints. This joy is ſaid to be everlaſting, permanent,

* Pſal. lxxxvii. 5. † Pſal. xlv. 7.

permanent, and durable; being one of the fruits of the eternal Spirit, it partakes of the nature of its divine author; and being founded on the everlaſting righteouſneſs of the Son of God, it is not only unſpeakable and full of glory, but abideth for ever. Our bleſſed Saviour, therefore, when comforting his diſciples, aſſures them that their joy was to be conſtant and perpetual, 'Your heart ſhall rejoice, and 'your joy no man taketh from you *.' Their ſpiritual enemies might endeavour to deprive them of this precious treaſure, at leaſt to interrupt their enjoyment of it; but they ſhould never be able entirely to take it away, or to remove the ground whereon it reſts. It is an eternal joy to be conſummated in the future world; according to the memorable words of him who is faithful and true, 'the water that I 'ſhall give him (that thirſteth) ſhall be in him a well 'of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life †.' Their joy is immortal; it is connected with eternal objects, and ſhall endure through endleſs ages.

They ſhall obtain joy and gladneſs. The Hebrew word here tranſlated *obtain*, is the ſame that occurred chap. xxxiii. 14. where it is rendered by *ſurpriſe*; 'Fearfulneſs (ſaith our Prophet) hath ſurpriſed the 'hypocrite.' The word ſignifies the acquiſition of any thing that hath been ſought after with avidity and diligence. The redeemed of the Lord, who are ſeeking everlaſting felicity and joy, ſhall certainly obtain theſe deſirable objects, of which they ſhall lay hold with exquiſite delight and retain full poſſeſſion of them for ever.—Sorrow and grief, which ariſe from the loſs of what is agreeable or valuable, and from experience or fear of what is painful.—Sighing and groaning, which are the well-known effect and natural expreſſion of diſtreſs, ſhall flee away and be diſpelled, like miſt, by the radiant beams of the ſun; ſo that they ſhall no more perplex and diſtreſs the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. Holineſs, peace, and joy, ſhall univerſally prevail, as the happy prelude to that glorious

* John xvi. 22. † John iv. 14.

glorious ſtate in which there ſhall not be one ſorrowful heart, one weeping eye, one complaining voice, one throbbing breaſt; wherein all the ranſomed of the Lord ſhall eternally rejoice and triumph.

The whole of this prediction beautifully repreſents the happy ſtate of the church at different periods under the New Teſtament, when public calamities, perſecutions, and impediments to the advancement of Chriſt's kingdom being removed, the number of the faithful ſhall be greatly increaſed, and they ſhall be bleſſed with abundant meaſures of divine grace. Every part, however, of the prophecy, ought to be underſtood in ſuch a qualified ſenſe as may accord with the mind of the Holy Spirit, who does not teach to expect that Chriſtians ſhall be free from thoſe accidents which are inſeparably connected with their preſent circumſtances in this world. No condition, however proſperous, to which they are here elevated, ſhall change the courſe of Providence, or totally exempt them from perſonal and domeſtic afflictions. The Prophet ſpeaks only of the ſpiritual ſtate of the people of God, when he who is able to do beyond what we can aſk or think, ſaves his choſen, bleſſes his inheritance, and lifts them up for ever.—Let us, then, with Chriſtians in every land, frequently pour out before the Lord our fervent and united ſupplications, for the accompliſhment of what is here foretold, for the felicity and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom; and for his bleſſing on the means employed for its advancement.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE now enter upon the conſideration of the firſt diſcourſe contained in the fourth part of the prophecies of Iſaiah. In the four chapters immediately preceding, is recorded the inſtructive hiſtory of ſome remarkable events which happened under the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. Our Prophet, acting in the capacity of hiſtorian, circumſtantially relates the unſucceſsful expedition of Senacherib, king of Aſſyria, into the land of Judea, with its conſequences. He deſcribes, in ſtrong colours, the very afflicted condition of the inhabitants of that country in this critical period, the terror of which ſeized upon the prince and people of Jeruſalem.—He records the inſolent threatening meſſages ſent by the invader to Hezekiah—The genuine piety and confidence in God diſcovered on the occaſion by the Jewiſh monarch—The embaſſy which he ſent to Iſaiah, with the encouraging prediction he emitted reſpecting the fate of the expedition—The ſevere chaſtiſement of Aſſyrian inſolence, and the wonderful deliverance of the king of Judah, and the metropolis of Judea. The relation of theſe incidents occupies the 36th and 37th chapters.—He then proceeds to narrate various occurrences, ſome of which are of a more private and domeſtic nature—Such as the very dangerous diſeaſe whereby Hezekiah was brought to the gates of death, with his devout behaviour in that trying emergency—The extraordinary cure by which his diſtemper was removed, and his complete recovery effected—The miraculous ſign whereby the promiſed prolongation of the king's life was confirmed, and the elegant hymn of thankſgiving in which the grateful monarch celebrates the benefit conferred upon him. Of theſe ſeveral topics he treats in the 38th chapter.—After which follows an account of the embaſſage ſent by the king of Babylon to congratulate the Jewiſh monarch on his reſtoration to health—And of the meſſage

meſſage that our Prophet had in command from God to deliver to his ſovereign, which, notwithſtanding its diſagreeable contents, with fidelity and fortitude he communicated to the royal ear, where it was received with becoming ſubmiſſion. Theſe remarkable circumſtances, intimately connected with the ſubjects of his prophecies, the inſpired writer relates in the 39th chapter, with which the hiſtorical part of his book concludes. At preſent I paſs over theſe important facts by which ſome of the predictions of Iſaiah are elucidated and confirmed, that I may continue, without interruption, the expoſition of the prophecies he hath delivered; in which I apprehend we are more nearly concerned.

The prophetical diſcourſes that follow from hence to the end of the book, in which are paſſages the moſt elegant and ſublime of any that occur in the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, were probably delivered after the Aſſyrian invaſion, in the latter part of the reign of Hezekiah. An explicit declaration having been given in the foregoing chapter, of the approaching diſſolution of the Jewiſh kingdom, the captivity of the prince and people by the kings of Babylon; the ſubſequent prophecy opens with a promiſe of the reſtoration of that kingdom, and the return of the people from captivity, in conſequence of the merciful interpoſition of the Almighty in their behalf. To this event, however, the views of our Prophet are not confined; the redemption from Babylon is employed as an image, to exhibit a redemption of an infinitely higher and more important nature, to be accompliſhed by the Son of God in the fulneſs of time. Theſe two events he connects together; and whilſt he treats of the former, he gives explicit intimations of the latter, the glories of which ſeem often to have ſo occupied his mind, that the ſubject he introduced is loſt in the other with which he was moſt delighted.—The ſalvation of the people of God is, in general, the pleaſant theme of all Iſaiah's predictions. This includes in it three diſtinct parts,

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which are closely connected with one another; the deliverance of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, the deliverance of the Gentiles from ignorance and idolatry, and the salvation of the church from the dominion of sin and death. They are also subordinate to one another, the latter being shadowed out under the image of the former. Cyrus was the agent of God in effecting the first deliverance; a far greater personage is the agent to accomplish the two latter deliverances, called the Lord God, the Servant, the Elect of Jehovah, in whom his soul delighteth. These subjects are not here treated separately, in a methodical manner, but in a connected view. They are all thrown together, mixed one with another; and the whole is delineated with the strongest boldest colours in the following prophecies.—The prophetic orations recorded in the preceding chapters were distinguished by some title, new inscription, or some other circumstance; henceforward every thing of this sort is laid aside, and the predictions run uniformly on, without any marked division, to the end of the book. The portion of prophecy which we now proceed to investigate, may be distributed into four sections; the first includes chap. 40th and 41st—the second, chap. 42d and 43d—the third, chap. 44th—47th,—the fourth, chap. 48th.

To solace the disconsolate minds of the just and devout, who were depressed by various afflictions, and waiting for the consolation of Israel, Isaiah, by the Spirit of prophecy, leads forward their thoughts, not merely to return from threatened captivity, but to the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, according to the promises made unto the fathers—and to the establishment of his spiritual kingdom in the world by the preaching of the gospel, when Jehovah was to display his glory and his salvation both to Jews and Gentiles. He introduces the sublime subject, by announcing to ministers of the church the good pleasure of God, that they ought to administer consolation to his people, by informing them that the

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King and kingdom of heaven was at no great diſtance, which was to terminate the calamities whereby they were diſtreſſed, ver. 1, 2. He proceeds to call them to prepare for giving this glorious Monarch a proper reception; to explain the ſpiritual nature of his kingdom, and the bleſſed effects wherewith it was to be attended, v. 3—11. He then clearly evinces that the empire of the great Meſſiah was to be founded in a way perfectly conſiſtent with the infinite wiſdom and power of Jehovah, manifeſted in the works of creation and providence, v. 12—17. After which he demonſtrates the vanity and abſurdity of idolatry, by exhibiting the power, the majeſty, and grandeur of the only true God, v. 18—26. He concludes, by applying to the church the truths he advanced, that they might thereby be encouraged to wait upon the everlaſting God, who gives renewed ſtrength to thoſe who are ready to faint, v. 27—31.

CHAP. XL.

COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, ſaith your God.

This prophecy, chiefly relating to the appearance of the Son of God, is uſhered in by the divine command now before us, which is repeated once, again, and a third time; to intimate the vaſt importance of the duty thus inculcated, and to ſhew that God is truly ſolicitous to promote the conſolation of his church. Indeed, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, hath uniformly diſcovered the ſtrongeſt concern for the happineſs and comfort of his peculiar people, whom he loves with the moſt tender affection, whom he pities under infirmities, and in whoſe proſperity he rejoices. He hath aſſumed the title of the God of all conſolation, who comforteth them under

der all their tribulations; he hath anointed his own Son, to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs; the Holy Spirit he hath promiſed to conſole and guide them, and in all their afflictions his word is their comfort. He hath required his ſervants to be of good chear, to comfort one another; and to their efforts in obedience to his appointment, he is often pleaſed to give efficacy by his preſence and bleſſing. The commiſſion here granted for this benevolent purpoſe is expreſsly limited to the people of God, whom he hath created for his glory, that they may ſhew forth his praiſe; whom he hath reſcued from the hands of their enemies, that they may ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him; and diſpoſed, under a grateful ſenſe of their manifold obligations to him, to conſecrate themſelves to his ſervice, and to yield the obedience which he juſtly demands, deſirous to enjoy his favour and approbation. To perſons of this deſcription, conſolation ought to be diſpenſed with the utmoſt promptitude. Who can decline to perform this delightful office, to which we are called by ſuch high authority.

Permit me for a few moments to leave the employment of an expoſitor, to execute the pleaſant taſk. Are any of you, brethren, dejected through poverty and indigence? Know that God hath graciouſly promiſed that your bread ſhall be given you, that your water ſhall be ſure, that the Lord will hear you, that the God of Iſrael will not forſake you. He ſhall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor alſo, and him that hath no helper. Amidſt the penury and hardſhips with which you may be diſtreſſed, remember with gratitude, that in God's favour are riches and honours, that your heavenly Father knoweth what you need, and hath aſſured you that walk uprightly, that he will withhold no good thing from you. Often look forward to the crown of life which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him, and

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to the kingdom of heaven, into which you ſhall be admitted, when the wicked of the earth ſhall be caſt away like droſs.—Are you depreſſed by afflictions of various kinds, and hath your life been embittered by diverſe calamities? Seek unto God betimes, and make ſupplication unto the Almighty, who hath ſaid, 'Becauſe he hath ſet his love upon me, I will 'deliver him; I will ſet him on high, becauſe he hath 'known my name*.' Hearken to his reviving words, 'When thou paſſeſt through the waters I will be 'with thee, and through the rivers they ſhall not o-'verflow thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy 'One of Iſrael thy Saviour†.' Your afflictions, however ſevere, are but light and of ſhort continuance, in compariſon of what your ſins have deſerved, and of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which they are working for you. They that ſow in tears ſhall reap in joy a plentiful harveſt of pure everlaſting conſolations.—Whatever be your condition, you ought to derive comfort from the amiable views given in ſcripture, of the character, the perfections, the providence, the promiſes of God; the endearing relations in which he ſtands connected with you, the experience you have had of his loving kindneſs, the the privileges you enjoy, and the glorious proſpects that you entertain. To theſe animating truths, worthy of your ſerious attention, may he who gave the commiſſion in virtue of which I now ſpeak, vouchſafe his benediction, that they may prove effectual for ſolacing diſconſolate minds.—Are you mourning over your tranſgreſſions, and are your hearts deeply affected with the enormity, the guilt, the pollution, and the power of ſin? 'With him (ſaith the High 'and Lofty One) will I dwell that is of a humble and 'contrite ſpirit, to revive the ſpirit of the humble, 'and to revive the heart of the contrite ones ‡.' 'I 'rejoice that you ſorrowed to repentance; for godly 'ſorrow worketh repentance to ſalvation not to be 'repented of §.' 'Bleſſed are they that mourn (ſaith Jeſus

* Pſal. xci. 14. † Chap. xliii. 2, 3. ‡ Chap. lvii. 15.
§ 2 Cor. vii. 9.

'Jeſus Chriſt) for they ſhall be comforted*' in due time, by him that comforteth them that are caſt down. Your drooping ſpirits ſhall yet be cheered, and you ſhall participate of thoſe ſublime refreſhments which ſhall for ever gladden and rejoice your hearts. I conclude this feeble attempt with the words, the very encouraging words of God by our Prophet; 'As the rain and the ſnow cometh down from 'heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the 'earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it 'may give ſeed to the ſower and bread to the eater; 'ſo ſhall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: 'it ſhall not return unto me void, but it ſhall accom-'pliſh that which I pleaſe, and it ſhall proſper in the 'thing whereto I ſent it †.' If I have encroached on your patience, and by this digreſſion deviated from the plan of theſe lectures, I requeſt that you will forgive me this wrong.—The commiſſion here given is ſtamped by ſupreme authority.

Saith your God, whoſe portion, whoſe inheritance, whoſe peculiar treaſure you are above all people; who is your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, Protector, and Comforter. This conſolatory work is not the contrivance of a feeble, erring creature, who might have recommended what is improper or unſeaſonable. It is the expreſs precept of your God, who are the poſterity of the patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, to whom he promiſed to be their God, and the God of their children. In virtue of the covenant into which he entered with your fathers, he hath eſtabliſhed an intimate connection betwixt him and you, he hath aſſumed the title of your God, which is your higheſt glory, and the ſource of all your felicity. Recollect, then, the peculiar intereſt that you have in him, and he in you, who are objects of his diſtinguiſhing love and tender care. Attentively conſider that the ſolemn charge contained in this and the following verſe, is delivered by him whoſe wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, with his other attributes,

* Mat. v. 4. † Chap. lv. 10, 11.

attributes, are employed for accompliſhing your happineſs and ſalvation; and that he is the object of your worſhip, hope, and confidence. After all, will you perverſely reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves, and render it of none effect? Will you make light of his comfortable words, whom you profeſſedly honour and love, to whom you are nearly related, and infinitely indebted? When he commands to comfort you, will you act ſo inconſiſtently with your duty and intereſt, as to refuſe to receive the conſolations of God, which are neither ſmall nor few?—I can do no more to alleviate your ſorrows, than ſuggeſt the ſure grounds of conſolation and joy, and unite with them earneſt prayers to the God of all grace, that he may ſatisfy you early with his mercy, that ye may be glad and rejoice all your days.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her iniquity is pardoned: for ſhe hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her ſins.

The manner in which conſolation ought to be adminiſtered to the people of God, with the ſubſtantial grounds on which it is founded, are in theſe words particularly ſpecified.—*Speak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem;* or, as the Hebrew word is rendered on the margin of ſome bibles, ſpeak to the heart, in the moſt pleaſant and winning manner, ſo as to gain the attention and the affection of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, who ſignificantly repreſented the church of God under the New Teſtament. Employed in this delightful buſineſs, we muſt attend not only to what we ſay, but to the manner in which we introduce and treat the ſubjects we mention, that they be well managed and well adapted to ſoothe the ſorrowful heart, and to raiſe the mind depreſſed by adverſity and ſolicitude. The expreſſion is emphatical, intimating that the comfort to be diſpenſed by the ſervants

vants of God, is pure and ſpiritual, not liable to decay; and that it is more than ſufficient to counterbalance all their preſent troubles.—Wherefore comfort yourſelves then, together, and edify one another. When you ſpeak to the feeble-minded and dejected of your brethren, have compaſſion on them, act the part of ſons of conſolation, treat them with gentleneſs, kindneſs, and ſympathy. See that the matter you ſuggeſt be really good, and that it be ſuited to the circumſtances of thoſe whom you addreſs. Adapt your diſcourſe to their particular characters, remembering that as we muſt not give the childrens bread to dogs, ſo we ought not to give to the children what is allotted for the ungodly and profane. Attend to the ſeaſon in which you ſpeak; for what may be well ſuited to one time, might be improper at another, and prove rather hurtful than uſeful. And beware of overcharging the ſubject you introduce; for a torrent of words may on ſome occaſions do conſiderable damage: whereas, did your ſpeech drop as the rain, and diſtil as the ſmall rain on the tender herb, they that dwell under your ſhadow might revive as the corn, grow as the lilly, caſt forth their roots as Lebanon, their branches might ſpread, and their beauty be as the olive tree.

That her warfare is accompliſhed. The ſtate of the church of God on earth, eſpecially under the former diſpenſation, is with propriety repreſented in ſcripture as a warfare. They are called to contend with the enemies of God and their own beſt intereſts; they are expoſed to innumerable dangers; like a vaſt army, they are in an unſettled condition, employed in actual ſervice, where the utmoſt vigilance and exertion is requiſite; every individual hath his particular ſtation aſſigned to him, which he muſt not preſume to relinquiſh; and to his prince he muſt look for direction and ſupport in every enterprize. The tranſlation of the Hebrew word in the margin ought not to be overlooked, where it is rendered *appointed time;* time fixed by infinite wiſdom for terminating

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not only the captivity at Babylon; but for putting a period to the laborious ſervices and conflicts of the people of God under the Moſaic œconomy. Whilſt that burdenſome diſpenſation continued, many difficult obſervances were preſcribed, which the poſterity of Iſrael were not permitted to neglect under the ſevereſt penalties; and therefore they were ſaid to be under a yoke of bondage. They were required to be continually vigilant, waiting for the Lord as they that watch wait for the morning; and the great object of their deſire was, deliverance from ſervitude, and introduction into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God.—As a ground of conſolation, our Prophet declares, that the time appointed for finiſhing the warfare of the church was nearly completed, the time to favour Zion was at hand, the fulneſs of time was about to commence at the period to which he looked forward. The expreſſion is metaphorical, taken from the condition of a ſoldier who is appointed to ſome painful ſtation from which he earneſtly longs to be relieved. In like manner, the church of old, which had aſſigned them hard ſervice, ardently wiſhed to be freed from the bonds that galled them, and now they are informed that the period determined for the abolition of their ſervitude, and the yoke of ceremonies impoſed upon them, was ſoon to arrive; when the great object of their expectation was to make his appearance, by whom their warfare ſhould be terminated, and an eaſier path to conqueſt opened.—How reviving the thought, that ere long our warfare ſhall alſo be accompliſhed, and the appointed time commence when we ſhall have finiſhed our labours, and ſhall enter into the reſt that remains for the people of God! All the days, then, of our appointed time, let us wait with hope and patience, until our change come. He that ſhall come will come, and not tarry.—Another ground of comfort is,

That her iniquity is pardoned. Theſe are indeed good and comfortable words. Sin expoſes the tranſgreſſor to the wrath of Almighty God; pardon of iniquity

iniquity cancels the obligation to deſerved puniſhment, and reſtores the ſinner to the favour of his offended Sovereign. To open the way for the honourable communication of this precious benefit, proper expiation muſt be made for the offences committed; convincing demonſtration muſt be given of their malignity and demerit, of the righteouſneſs and veracity of Jehovah, whilſt mercy is extended to the criminal. In conſequence of compenſation offered to the juſtice of God, the fault is blotted out, the treſpaſs is forgiven. From the concurring teſtimonies of the law and the goſpel, it plainly appears that remiſſion of ſins is conferred through the precious blood of Chriſt, in virtue of the expiatory ſacrifice which he, as the great High Prieſt of our profeſſion, preſented for the ſins of his people. According to the ſcriptures, Jeſus Chriſt is the propitiation for the ſins of the world; through his perfect atonement, God is declared propitious to men, and men are reconciled to God. The firm belief of this important truth excites indignation againſt ſin; it leads to repentance, and ſincere obedience; whilſt it imparts reviving conſolation to the diſconſolate mind. Thoſe, therefore, who would comfort the people of God, are directed to ſay her iniquity is pardoned, the handwriting of ordinances which was againſt them is taken out of the way, and a complete ſacrifice is offered, in virtue of which is granted remiſſion of ſins. The long-wiſhed for period was then at no great diſtance, wherein the Son of God was to put an end to ſin, to finiſh tranſgreſſion, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs.—What ſure ground of comfort doth this ineſtimable benefit convey, which comprehends actual deliverance from evils of the greateſt magnitude, the aſſured proſpect of every deſirable bleſſing, and which happily diſpoſes all who receive it to depart from iniquity.—There is forgiveneſs with thee, O Lord, that thou mayeſt be feared; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. It was a remarkable ſaying

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of a heathen philoſopher, from which we may receive an inſtructive leſſon. 'Though (ſaid he) I was perſuaded that men could never know, and that the gods would pardon the evil I might do, I would not do it.' This ſentiment is worthy of a ſervant of the living God, and ought in ſubſtance to be adopted by thoſe whom he hath comforted with the voice of pardon, to whom he hath ſaid, Be of good chear, thy ſins are forgiven thee. Hath he graciouſly remitted paſt tranſgreſſions? then it becomes you to ſay, I will not offend any more.

For ſhe hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her ſins. Theſe words contain a truth which at firſt ſight ſeems paradoxical. They do not affirm that the people of God had been puniſhed far beyond the demerit of their crimes; that their ſufferings had exceeded what their ſins deſerved. If the conſummate purity and righteouſneſs of Jehovah, and the awful puniſhment denounced againſt tranſgreſſion, are candidly conſidered, this ſuppoſition muſt appear inconſiſtent and abſurd. Under the preſſure of the greateſt calamities, the church hath good reaſon to join in the confeſſion of Ezra, 'Thou haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve *.' They ſeem deſigned to intimate what is indeed a ſource of ſtrong conſolation to the upright among men, that ſuch are the tender mercies of God, that like a kind parent, recollecting the chaſtiſements indured by his children, he frankly allows that they were more than ſufficient.

In the prophetic ſtile, double which commonly ſignifies twice as much, denotes vaſt abundance, ſuch as is fully enough to ſerve the purpoſes intended. Double recompence threatened by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xvi. 18. expreſſes the adequate retribution which the children of Iſrael were to receive for their ſins. Double honour promiſed to them for their ſhame; double liberty in lieu of the reſtraints they had felt, were deſigned to aſſure them of the diſ-

* Chap. ix. 13.

diſtinguiſhed honour and perfect liberty to which they were to be advanced. The words then under conſideration, may import that God, who in righteouſneſs had afflicted his people on account of their many atrocious crimes, was about to reſtrain his judgments, to lay aſide his diſpleaſure, and not only to pardon their ſins, but to afford them plentiful communications of the moſt ſubſtantial bleſſings. He would impart to them large meaſures of ſpiritual benefits, whereby they were to be enriched under the New Teſtament, ſuch as the gifts of righteouſneſs and peace, the Holy Spirit, with his conſolations and joys.—From theſe conſiderations, the people of God ought to derive comfort; and indeed they are admirably adapted to raiſe their drooping ſpirits, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghoſt. True comfort is of celeſtial origin, and cannot be found among the creatures, which may indeed furniſh the materials whereof the cordial is compoſed; but the bleſſed God reſerves the diſpoſal of it entirely in his own hand. Apply then with earneſtneſs to him, that he would give efficacy to the means employed to revive and chear diſconſolate minds. We may trouble and perplex ourſelves and others, but we are as incapable of changing the heart from a ſorrowful to a joyful ſtate, as of converting it from the love of ſin, to delight in holineſs. Whilſt then we uſe the means of acquiring this precious bleſſing, let us have recourſe to God, that he may render them effectual.

3 ¶ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make ſtraight in the deſart a highway for our God.

A public crier is here introduced, giving orders, by ſolemn proclamation, that the highway be levelled and ſmoothed, for the expected advent of an illuſtrious Prince, that he might complete the great deſign

deſign of his appearance; that every obſtruction ſhould be removed that might impede his progreſs through the deſart. In giving this intimation, his voice was to be greatly elevated, after the manner of thoſe who are employed in publiſhing what is intended to be generally known.—Though this ſcripture might have a primary reference to the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, the inſpired evangeliſts apply it to the forerunner of Jeſus Chriſt, in whom it was fully verified. Being interrogated who he was, he replied, 'I am the voice of one cry-'ing in the wilderneſs; make ſtraight the way of the 'Lord, as ſaid the prophet Eſaias*.' In like manner, the apoſtle Matthew, writing of this eminent man, affirms; 'This is he that was ſpoken of by the pro-'phet Eſaias, ſaying, the voice of one crying in the 'wilderneſs, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make 'his paths ſtraight †.' In the exerciſe of his public miniſtry, John the Baptiſt, with a ſtrong voice, and great earneſtneſs, admoniſhed the Jewiſh people of their errors; he reproved them for their ſins, and exhorted them to repentance. In this awful preacher, was remarkably fulfilled, not only the prediction of our Prophet, but alſo the ſimilar prophecy delivered by Malachi, 'Behold I will ſend my meſſenger, and 'he ſhall prepare the way before me ‡.' Indeed this evangelical ſenſe of the prophecy is ſo apparent, and ſtands forth in ſo ſtrong a light, that ſome interpreters will not allow this verſe to have relation to any other event.

This voice, as foretold, was heard *in the wilderneſs*; for John the Baptiſt came preaching in the wilderneſs of Judea §. The words of Iſaiah are ſo adjuſted, as that literally underſtood, the wilderneſs may be joined with what immediately precedes, or that figuratively explained, it may be connected with what follows. By the peculiar diſpoſition of divine providence, John, who was our Lord's forerunner, exerciſed his ſacred function in the place called the deſart,

* John i. 23. † Chap. iii. 3. ‡ Chap. iii. 1. § Mat. iii. 1.

deſart, as plainly appears from the account given of him by Matthew, to which I already alluded. Thither reſorted to him Jeruſalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confeſſing their ſins. Our Prophet, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, foreſeeing that the wilderneſs was to be the place where John was to exerciſe his miniſtry, under the image of the deſart, exhibits the forlorn ſpiritual ſtate of thoſe among whom the way of the Lord ſhould be prepared; ſo that his words are no leſs true in the allegorical than in the literal ſenſe. By altering the punctuation, we read in the 'wilderneſs prepare ye the way of the Lord.' Many obſtructions lie in his way, which ought to be removed, that the great Redeemer may obtain acceſs into mens hearts, and that he may be cordially received with faith, affection, and obedience. Preparation is indiſpenſibly requiſite, to give the kingdom of God a proper reception. Falſe prejudices, corrupt affections, odious ſuperſtitions, criminal infidelity, with indulgence in the practice of iniquity, rendered the ſpiritual condition of the Jews, as of mankind in general, barren and deſolate, like an uncultivated country. In this forlorn ſtate, people were exhorted by John the Baptiſt, according to the prediction we are now conſidering.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, &c. Both expreſſions here uſed, ſeem to be of the ſame import. The bleſſed God hath formed the minds of men to be ſpiritual temples wherein he delights to reſide; his habitations, wherein he is pleaſed to dwell, when properly diſpoſed to give him ſuitable entertainment. He vouchſafes to poſſeſs all the faculties of the human ſoul when brought into his ſubjection, and to employ them as inſtruments of advancing his glory. To prepare them for this ſervice, they muſt be reduced to order, and brought into obedience to the will of God; they muſt be delivered from corrupt prejudices, from pernicious errors, from deteſtible hypocriſy, and ſenſual affections; and having attained

ed a ſound underſtanding of divine truths, they muſt be devoted to the practice of holineſs. To carry forward theſe important purpoſes, previous to our Lord's appearance John the Baptiſt was ſent, loudly to call upon thoſe who heard him, to give the Lord himſelf, who was coming into his temple, a proper reception. With this view, he preached that men ought to repent, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, to confeſs and renounce their ſins, to amend their ways and doings *, whereby they were diſqualified for being admitted into the kingdom of God, which was then about to be eſtabliſhed.—The ſame preſſing demands are made upon you, my brethren. Though it is not in man that walketh to direct his own ſteps, or to prepare the Lord's way; for the preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord, and when he comes he opens a way for himſelf; yet he condeſcends to invite us to be workers together with him. Though he cometh as the rain that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the ſons of men, and makes his way over all oppoſition; yet he calls upon you to prepare his way, to abandon your tranſgreſſions, to accept of the gracious offers of righteouſneſs and ſtrength, which he is ever ready to convey to thoſe who are truly ſenſible of their need of them. I beſeech you, then, in the words of the prophet Hoſea, 'Sow to yourſelves in righteouſneſs, and reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: it is time to 'ſeek the Lord,' till he come and rain righteouſneſs 'upon you †.'

4 Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low: and the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough places plain.

Theſe words clearly ſhow in what manner the kingdom of the Meſſiah was to be introduced among

* See Luke iii. 7. *et ſeq.* † Chap. x. 13.

the Jews by the miniſtry of John the Baptiſt, and afterward extended throughout the whole world.—The idea here expreſſed is taken from the practice of eaſtern monarchs, who, when they entered on an expedition thro' deſarts or unfrequented countries, ſent before them pioneers, to open the paſſages, to level the ways, and to remove obſtructions. Judea was ſeparated from Babylon by an immenſe deſart, thro' which a way was to be opened for the return of the Jews from captivity to their own land. To comfort the people of God, Iſaiah foretels that every obſtacle ſhould be removed, and the way cleared for their journey. Leaving this view of the ſubject, let us endeavour to inveſtigate the ſpiritual import of the prediction, which is the principal thing here intended, and of which the miniſtry of John affords an excellent comment.—Valleys are exalted, in the figurative ſenſe, where enormous tranſgreſſors, who have been deeply depreſſed with a humbling ſenſe of their ſins and miſeries, are raiſed from deſpondency to hope, having their lowly minds filled with peace, and joy, and conſolation. Under the new œconomy, which was to commence about the time of John the Baptiſt's preaching in the wilderneſs, God, rich in mercy, was pleaſed ſo plentifully to diſpenſe his grace unto men, that thoſe who were greatly dejected and afflicted on account of their ſins, and almoſt ſunk into deſpair, and ſo ſignificantly compared to a valley, were to be exalted, by means of repentance and faith in Jeſus Chriſt, to the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of God.—Mountains and hills are made low, in the allegorical ſenſe, where thoſe who were proud and arrogant, puffed up with a high opinion of themſelves, their privileges, abilities, and performances, and truſted to their own merits and actions, are reduced to a lowly ſenſe of their meanneſs, unworthineſs, and guilt; and diſpoſed thankfully to ſubmit to the righteouſneſs and grace of Jeſus Chriſt. In this manner the greateſt impediments are taken away, which hindered the advancement of the kingdom of God, and

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the omnipotent arm of Jehovah is revealed, whereby he hath ſcattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts, and brought down every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of Chriſt.

And the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, &c. Theſe words, which are nearly of the ſame import with thoſe already explained, clearly intimate, in the figurative ſenſe, that the perverſe minds of men were to be rectified; that their vitiated inclinations were to be bent into compliance with the holy will of God; that the errors of their judgments were to be corrected, their ſpiritual deformity cured, and their ſiniſter actions and deſigns were to be properly regulated. In conſequence whereof, their wrong ſentiments reſpecting the way of ſalvation ſhould be abandoned; ſuch as were anciently eſpouſed by the Phariſees, the Saducees, and heathen philoſophers; ſo that they ſhould learn to think, to ſpeak, and to act, in a manner agreeable to the precepts of the goſpel, and the way of righteouſneſs therein revealed.—*And the rough places plain.* The harſh rugged diſpoſitions of men, and their vicious practices, were to be ſubdued, and exchanged for ſmooth, eaſy, pleaſant tempers, and amiable conduct. In few words, all the difficulties and obſtacles which impeded the advancement of the Meſſiah's kingdom, were to be removed; that he might have eaſy acceſs to the throne of mens hearts, where he was to reign triumphant.—Such are the aſtoniſhing effects of the diſpenſation of grace in the kingdom of the Son of God. Throughout the whole courſe of his miniſtry, he uniformly aimed to exalt the humble, and to abaſe the proud. He expreſsly declared this to be the rule of his adminiſtration, 'that whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf ſhall be abaſed, 'and he that ſhall humble himſelf ſhall be exalted*.' This maxim hath been remarkably verified in the courſe of providence, by the diſpenſation of the goſpel, which hath been ſent to unpoliſhed nations, involved in all manner of perverſe wickedneſs, whoſe diſpoſitions

* Mat. xxiii. 12.

diſpoſitions and cuſtoms have been thereby rectified and improved. Philoſophers and worldly-wiſe men, elated with their own excellencies, have been obliged to lay aſide their pride and ſtubborn prejudices, that the way of the Lord might be made plain before his face. The rich, the great, and the powerful, men of diſtinguiſhed eminence, who looked down with contempt upon other people, are rendered meek and lowly; whilſt the poor and the humble are elevated to the greateſt dignity, and the moſt important privileges. Would to God that this day this ſcripture were fulfilled among us!

5 And the glory of the LORD ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall ſee *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath ſpoken *it*.

Our Prophet, dropping for the preſent farther alluſion to the return of the Jews from Babylon, and the reſtoration of their city, temple, and worſhip, proceeds to ſpeak of a far more ſublime object, the conſpicuous diſplay of the glory of Jehovah, which was to follow the miniſtry of John the Baptiſt.—The glory of the Lord is the bright combined effulgence of his conſummate excellencies, the ſplendor of his divine perfections, which are highly exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe. He is therefore called, the God, the Lord of glory. His glorious attributes he hath manifeſted in the works that he hath made, which bear impreſſions of his wiſdom, power, and goodneſs; and in his providential diſpenſations, whereby he ſupplies the wants of his creatures, and governs them according to his pleaſure. Revelation hath given ſtill brighter diſplays of his character and majeſty, by the moſt ſtupendous miracles, perſonal appearances; and eſpecially by the promulgation of the law, amid the diſcharge of the artillery of heaven, the ſhaking of mount Sinai, the blaze of fire and ſmoke. But the moſt illuſtrious manifeſtation of the divine glory was given when the Son of God

God appeared on earth, and exhibited the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. In the other diſcoveries, men beheld ſome ſcattered rays, ſome feebler emanations of excellence; but in the perſon, office, and redemption of Meſſiah, the cleareſt manifeſtation is given of the glory of Jehovah; there it ſhines forth as light from the ſun. There it appears accommodated to human weakneſs, and may be contemplated through the vail of his fleſh, with the greateſt pleaſure, until we are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. There it ſhines with inexpreſſible ſweetneſs; righteouſneſs looks down from heaven with a pleaſing aſpect, truth is eſtabliſhed on the earth, love is diſplayed in higheſt perfection, juſtice is fully ſatisfied, omnipotence is exerted, mercy triumphs, whilſt all unite in complete harmony to effect the deſigns of infinite wiſdom and grace.

And all fleſh ſhall ſee it together, &c. Theſe words admit of two interpretations, both of which ſeem conſiſtent with truth and the deſign of the prophecy.—They plainly intimate, that people of every deſcription, of every nation and language, of every character and condition, of every order and rank, great and ſmall, rich and poor, young and old, learned and unlearned, without reſpect of perſons, ſhall behold the glory of God manifeſt in the fleſh. Through the vail of human nature, they ſhall ſee God, for he that knoweth the Son, knoweth the Father alſo; he that hath ſeen the Son, hath ſeen him that ſent him. The fact hath exactly correſponded with this declaration, for after the revelation of the Lord of glory, perſons of every ſort had acceſs to ſee him, and to converſe with him.—According to the opinion of ſome interpreters, the words may be read thus, 'All fleſh 'ſhall ſee what the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken.' In this view, the expreſſion imports, that people of every place, and of every age, ſhall behold the fulfilment of this and the other predictions contained in theſe Prophecies, which no other than the ſervant of the omniſcient

omniſcient God could have delivered. This high privilege they ſhall enjoy, becauſe Jehovah himſelf hath given the moſt explicit aſſurance of the certainty of what is foretold, and his faithful word cannot poſſibly fail of its accompliſhment. Though the ſolemn declarations publiſhed by the Almighty are not properly the objects of ſight, yet the important events to which they refer become conſpicuous and attract attention. By obſerving the exact correſpondence between the prediction and the event, faith in the divine teſtimony is eſtabliſhed, and ſtands not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. To prevent every doubt that might ariſe reſpecting the true and faithful ſayings above recorded, the moſt explicit aſſurance is given, that they were certainly to be verified in their ſeaſon. According to the word of the Lord, the revelation of his glory hath already taken effect, and been contemplated by people of all nations; hereafter the prophecy ſhall be more extenſively accompliſhed.—How would we have rejoiced to have ſeen the child Jeſus lying in the manger, or diſputing with the doctors in the temple; to have ſeen him working miracles, or preaching the goſpel; to have ſeen him on the mount of transfiguration, or aſcending up into heaven! How much more bleſſed ſhall we be, to behold his face in righteouſneſs; to contemplate his love, that paſſeth knowledge, and to triumph in his ſalvation!

6 And the voice ſaid, Cry: And he ſaid, What ſhall I cry? All fleſh *is* graſs; and all the goodlineſs thereof *is* as the flower of the field.

In reviewing the commencement and progreſs of the kingdom of God, through the ſeveral ſcenes exhibited to our Prophet, he had already heard two voices, and now a third is introduced, commanding him to make proclamation of what is here given him in charge.—The voice that required Iſaiah to publiſh

liſh what follows, muſt have proceeded from Jehovah, who alone hath right to dictate to his ſervants, what they ought to make known for the inſtruction of the church. From his order they derive their authority. Being commanded to exalt his voice and ſpeak aloud, he puts the queſtion, What ſhall I cry? to which he received for anſwer, 'All fleſh is graſs,' &c. This momentous truth, with what follows, he is directed to publiſh with the greateſt earneſtneſs and warmth far and wide. The contraſt ſtated in this paſſage, is betwixt the fleſh and the word of our God, to each of which very different qualities are aſſigned. The term fleſh, which is uſed in Scripture to ſignify all mankind, emphatically expreſſes the frailty, the corruption, and vanity of human nature in its preſent ſtate. The name given to the corruptible part of our conſtitution is transferred to the whole man, to render us more humble and more ſenſible of our mortal periſhing condition; and to remind us that we cannot long continue to enjoy the proviſions made for our ſupport. Under this humiliating deſignation, is comprehended the whole human race who are deſtitute of the Spirit of God; whatever natural and acquired excellencies they poſſeſs, whatever external forms of religion they aſſume.—The carnal Iſrael, the temporary Moſaic œconomy, compriſing circumciſion, with the rites and prerogatives peculiar to the ancient people of God, which in Scripture language, are denominated fleſh. In this ſenſe, the word is frequently uſed in the New Teſtament, as in Rom. iv. 1. 'What ſhall 'we ſay then, that Abraham our father, as pertain-'ing to the fleſh hath found.' Did this renowned progenitor of the Jews, this father of the faithful, obtain righteouſneſs and ſalvation by means of circumciſion, or any external privileges connected with that rite, or by his own performances? From what follows, it plainly appears, that Abraham was not juſtified by any of theſe things. With great propriety was the deſignation fleſh given to the rites and ceremonies, the external privileges and ſervices belonging

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ing to the Jewiſh people. As the fleſh covers and incloſes the ſpirit, whereby it is animated, ſo under the covert of carnal ordinances, inſtituted in the Old Teſtament, lay concealed from common view, thoſe good things which are now more fully exhibited. The ſacrifices and ſervices enjoined by that diſpenſation, chiefly reſpected the fleſh; they were ſuited to make external ſhew, and adapted to yield ſatisfaction to carnal men. When celebrated, deſtitute of ſpirit and life, they found not acceptance with God; they did not promote the ſalvation of men, and therefore, after having ſerved for a while the purpoſes for which they were intended, like fleſh, they periſhed; like the graſs they faded.

All fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof as the flower of the field. Graſs ſprings out of the earth, for a while it is nouriſhed by the moiſture it receives, it is ſoon, however, parched by the ſcorching rays of the ſun, nipped by the froſts, trampled on by paſſengers, devoured by the cattle, cut down by the mower, or if ſuffered to eſcape injury from without, ere long it withers and decays. How juſt the repreſentation it affords of all fleſh. Man is formed of the duſt of the earth; he is ſuſtained by its productions; he is continually expoſed to various accidents and diſtempers, which even in the bloom of youth, cauſe beauty and ſtrength quickly to decay, to injuries and death that may ſuddenly cut him down. And, though for a time he avoid theſe caſualties, he ſoon becomes old, withers, and paſſes away. The human body, even whilſt it grows larger and ſtronger, is haſting to diſſolution; the human mind, even when vigorous and expanded with knowledge, in a little time becomes languid and feeble. Man's external condition is always precarious, and often unexpectedly reverſed; and his religious attainments, deſtitute of the true grace of God, ſoon diſappear like a flower in the field, to which all his goodlineſs is here compared.—There is a great apparent difference in the circumſtances of mankind. Some are eminently diſtinguiſhed

tinguiſhed above others for beauty and elegance, for ſtrength or eloquence; ſome by penetration, wiſdom, and learning; ſome by riches and honours, power, magnificence, and other ſplendid advantages.—All this goodlineſs or glory, as the apoſtle Peter expreſſes it, is as the flower of the graſs. The exterior appearance may be more comely and gay, but ſtill it is fading, and often ſhorter lived than the graſs itſelf. Though the flower is not cut down, or pluckt off; though it receive no external hurt, yet a gentle breeze of wind, even the air conſumes its beauty, and deſtroys its fragrance. In like manner, all human excellence and glory ſoon periſhes; the lovely form, the beautiful features, the ſtrong conſtitution, the extenſive knowledge, the amiable diſpoſitions, and noble indowments, which are univerſally admired, ſhall in a little time fade and decay, even as the beauty and ſplendor of the former œconomy hath long ſince diſappeared.—'Behold thou haſt made my days 'as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing be-'fore thee: verily every man at his beſt ſtate is alto-'gether vanity *.'

7 The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth: becauſe the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: ſurely the people *is* graſs.

8 The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God ſhall ſtand for ever.

The ſubject introduced in the former verſe, is here farther illuſtrated and confirmed. The tranſitory nature of all that is here ſignified by the withering graſs and the fading flower is repeatedly affirmed. This mode of expreſſion is ſometimes adopted, in the Holy Scriptures, to ſhew the fervour and intenſe deſire of the Sacred Writer—to convey a juſt ſenſe of the high importance of the ſubject of which he treats—to give full evidence of the certainty of what he

* Pſal. xxxix. 5.

declares, that it is a truth of general concern, which he is neither afraid nor aſhamed to inculcate;—and to awaken attention, to the much neglected momentous doctrine, that it may produce a more deep and laſting impreſſion upon the mind. A remarkable inſtance occurs in Ezek. vii. 5, 6. 'Thus ſaith the 'Lord God, An evil, an only evil, behold, is come; 'an end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for 'thee, behold, it is come.' In the 23d chapter of Matthew, Jeſus Chriſt repeats the ſame words eight times, that they might have the greater effect on thoſe to whom they were addreſſed; and in the paſſage under conſideration, our Prophet again and again affirms the uncertainty of worldly enjoyments, and the ſhort continuance of the Moſaic diſpenſation.—The reaſon of this inſtability is aſſigned in theſe words, *Becauſe the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.* The operations of the Spirit of Jehovah, and the effects thereby produced, are compared to the wind that bloweth where it liſteth, by Jeſus Chriſt in his diſcourſe with Nicodemus. So ſtrong is the force of the wind, that it carries all before it; it beats down the luxuriant graſs, and it cauſes to wither the flowers, and they decay. In like manner, the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit diveſts men of that tranſitory goodlineſs and glory whereof they were fooliſhly conceited and vain. How ſuddenly hath the greateſt worldly proſperity been blaſted, by his ſecret operation who worketh all in all. When thou correcteſt man for iniquity, thou makeſt his beauty to conſume like a moth. The moſt vigorous conſtitution, the moſt admired comelineſs, hath been quickly ſpoiled. Even the higher advantages of wiſdom, learning, and virtue, have inſtantaneouſly diſappeared; when thou takeſt away mens breath, they die and return to their duſt. The moſt learned head is deprived of its knowledge; the moſt eloquent tongue is ſilenced; the nobleſt projects are baffled; the work of the moſt ingenious artificer falls to the ground. By his mighty influence, the Spirit of the Lord diveſts all that is called

called fleſh, of whatever is eſteemed its goodlineſs and deſirable qualities. He ſtains the pride of all human excellence, that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence*. He hath aboliſhed the Moſaic œconomy, which is decayed and waxen old, to make way for the kingdom of Meſſiah, that ſhall endure for ever. And when he is pleaſed to accompany the goſpel with his divine agency, he diſſipates the vain hopes and imaginary ſplendid attainments, that men had acquired by the works of the law, whereby no fleſh can be juſtified in the ſight of God.—Thus, 'there is verily 'a diſannulling of the commandment, going before, 'for the weakneſs and unprofitableneſs thereof.' For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we draw nigh unto God †. Juſtly then might the Prophet affirm, that the people is graſs.—May the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, deeply impreſs this important truth on each of our hearts, which we are daily taught by the revolutions of time, the changes in nature, the viciſſitudes of day and night, and the flowers of the field, as well as by our own feelings and obſervation of what paſſes in the world.

But the word of our God ſhall ſtand for ever. The glorious goſpel of his grace, the perfect law of liberty, the word of truth, the New Teſtament confirmed by the death of Jeſus Chriſt, is doubtleſs intended by this expreſſion. This is the word of our God, whoſe we are, and whom we ſerve, and on this account it ſtands diſtinguiſhed from the diſcourſes, oracles, and laws delivered by orators and philoſophers to the Gentiles, and the ordinances and ſtatutes delivered by Moſes to the Iſraelites. This is the word which the apoſtle Peter affirms is by the goſpel preached unto you, and that is here declared to ſtand for ever. It is ſettled in heaven not ſubject to change or decay; it is not to be eſtimated by the fluctuating uncertainty of earthly things, for in the words of the apoſtle, it endureth for ever. It bears the image of the

* 1 Cor. i. 20. † Heb. vii. 18, 19.

the eternal God from whom it proceeds, who hath thereby eſtabliſhed a kingdom that cannot be moved. All attempts to counteract or deſtroy it are vain and abſurd; for thus ſaith the faithful and true witneſs, 'Heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, but my words 'ſhall not paſs away *.' The truths which they contain are of perpetual duration, the laws therein publiſhed ſhall never be abrogated, nor ſhall the promiſes fail of receiving their full accompliſhment. The effects which the word of God produces in the minds of men, when attended with the demonſtration of the Spirit, and with power, in regeneration and the new life thereby conveyed, are everlaſting and ſhall never periſh. When received by faith, it becomes an abiding principle of an immortal life; being itſelf incorruptible, it is the mean of conveying a life that is not ſubject to decay, and of communicating everlaſting conſolation and good hope through grace.—Let us recollect the ſtability and perpetuity of the word of God, amid all the various changes that we feel and ſee around us, eſpecially when diſappointed in the objects of our expectation, and when providential diſpenſations ſeem to run counter to the divine teſtimony. Let us diligently attend to the direction of the apoſtle James, which he thus expreſſes, 'Where-'fore, lay aſide all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naugh-'tineſs, and receive with meekneſs the engrafted 'word, which is able to ſave your ſouls; and be ye 'doers of the word, and not hearers only †.'

9 ¶ O Zion, that bringeſt good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jeruſalem, that bringeſt good tidings, lift up thy voice with ſtrength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; ſay unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Our Prophet next addreſſes the citizens of Zion and Jeruſalem, and more eſpecially the evangeliſts who were to go forth from thence to publiſh throughout

* Mat. xxiv. 35. † James i. 21, 22.

out the cities of Judah, the good tidings which were to be afterwards made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. To the preachers of the ſalvation of the Lord, the command is given to go to the moſt frequented conſpicuous places, and in the moſt public and open manner, to promulgate the ſacred knowledge they were employed to communicate. Go throughout the whole land, enter into the cities and the ſynagogues, and, wherever you find opportunities, preach the goſpel, and cauſe the joyful ſound to be every where heard. As becometh men poſſeſſing undaunted fortitude, ardent zeal, and fully perſuaded of the truth and importance of what they ſay, lift up your voices, and cry from the moſt advantageous eminences, in the chief places of concourſe. Exert yourſelves to the utmoſt in this arduous work, and ſhew by your firm and vigorous conduct, that, far from being under the influence of timidity, you act with boldneſs and reſolution.—This order plainly ſuppoſes, that the church of Jeſus Chriſt was to have its primary reſidence in Zion, from whence miniſters of the goſpel were to go forth into all lands, that they might proclaim the ſalvation of the Lord. And it is well known to have been obeyed with the utmoſt alacrity by the firſt diſciples of the Son of God, who went forth every where preaching the goſpel of the kingdom. The Lord God, who of old promulgated his law from mount Sinai, publiſhed from mount Zion thoſe ſublime doctrines and precepts, which are of the higheſt importance to the ſalvation of mankind. From thence, with perſpicuity authority, and an elevated voice, he taught in perſon the way of God in truth, and afterward by his ſervants, diſſeminated among the people the moſt momentous inſtructions.

Behold your God. Theſe words contain the comprehenſive ſum of the good tidings wherewith the miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt were to be entruſted, that they might make them known to the cities of Judah. Behold your God, who now appears among you manifeſt

nifeſt in the fleſh, full of grace and truth, according to the promiſes and predictions made unto the fathers. Behold your Redeemer, your Inſtructor, your Sovereign, your Shepherd; who is the ſalvation, righteouſneſs, and life of his people; who hath been ſpoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets which have been ſince the world began. Contemplate him through the vail of humanity, diſplaying the glory of divinity, exhibiting the riches of his grace, executing the will of Jehovah, and accompliſhing your ſalvation. See him inculcating the doctrines of grace, of truth, and wiſdom, demonſtrating himſelf the Saviour of his church; and who being made perfect through ſufferings, aſcended the throne of his majeſty. From his high exaltation, he ſhall ſend down the precious gifts and graces of the Spirit upon the aſſemblies of his people, and demonſtrate his gracious ſpiritual preſence among them, by illuminating, ſanctifying, and comforting their minds.—Accordingly, we read in the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, that the evangeliſts went throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, preaching the word; and that there were diſciples in many other places *, who were invited to behold the glory of the Lord. In the miniſtry of the goſpel, the ſame meſſage is brought to you, brethren. Though the God of your ſalvation is now inviſible to mortal eyes; we call upon you, in the exerciſe of faith, to contemplate with admiration and joy, the diſplays he hath given of his power and preſence, for whom you have waited, in whom you truſt, and by whom you hope to be exalted to eternal glory. 'Think on the marvellous 'works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judg-'ments of his mouth. He is the Lord our God †.'

10 Behold, the LORD God will come with ſtrong *hand*, and his arm ſhall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

The

* Chap. viii. 1. xi. 19. † Pſal. cv. 57.

The meſſengers to be employed in carrying good tidings, are farther inſtructed to call mens attention to the glorious advent of Jehovah. I ſuppoſe that the deſign of the coming of the Lord, rather than the manner of his appearance, is the ſubject of this prediction; and therefore I prefer the marginal tranſlation, which runs thus, *The Lord God will come againſt the ſtrong*. Indeed the prediction ſeems to require this interpretation; for when Iſaiah foretels that the Lord God will come to rule and to conquer, it is natural to imagine that he would mention the object which he was to overthrow. It is not difficult to perceive that the god of this world is intended, who is ſignificantly called by Jeſus Chriſt the *ſtrong man* *. The juſtice of this deſignation cannot be queſtioned, if we conſider that originally he was a celeſtial intelligence, who excelled in ſtrength; if we attend to the names given him in ſcripture, the extent of his dominion, and his powerful operations upon mankind. He is therefore emphatically denominated, the prince of this world. He muſt undoubtedly be ſtrong whom no created angel could overcome, and whom the Lord God came to ſubdue and vanquiſh. To this great event the following words of the apoſtle John plainly allude; 'For this purpoſe the Son 'of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the 'works of the devil †.' That the Son of God ſhould come into the world, to overthrow the evil one and his empire of darkneſs, is the ſum of the predictions delivered by the prophets, and of the promiſes made to the fathers. How glorious did he appear when he came againſt this ſtrong one, travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, by his outſtretched omnipotent arm ſurmounting all oppoſition, taking the prey from the mighty, triumphing over his greateſt enemy, leading captivity captive. By this conqueſt the way is opened, whereby the God of peace ſhall ere long bruiſe Satan underneath his peoples feet.

And his arm ſhall rule for him; or his arm ſhall prevail

* Mat. xii. 29. † 1 John iii. 8.

prevail againſt the ſtrong whom he came to deſtroy, or his arm ſhall procure for him the government or dominion. Adopting any of theſe tranſlations, the ſentiment is juſt and beautiful; and, when applied to the Lord of lords, and King of kings, exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty on high, is eaſily underſtood. When he comes by his providence, his word, and Spirit, to deſtroy the empire of Satan, and to eſtabliſh his kingdom of righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; his adverſary falls like lightning from heaven. Attend to the triumphant language of the Son of God in this glorious proſpect, which affords a beautiful illuſtration of this ſubject, 'Now is the judgment of this world; now ſhall the 'prince of this world be caſt out *.' By the apoſtacy of man from God, Satan uſurped dominion over the human race, who became ſubject to his tyrannical ſway, and confuſion overſpread the earth. To aboliſh theſe evils, to reform theſe abuſes, to reſtore equity and order to mankind, to condemn thoſe who raiſed the diſturbance, and to abſolve thoſe who were injured, the King of righteouſneſs and peace, the Saviour and Repreſentative of the church, through death, deſtroyed death, and him that had the power of death. This immenſe enterprize, whereby the prince of this world was deprived of his empire, and the arm of Jehovah got the victory, was not compleated at once, but is gradually carried forward to its conſummation. It was meritoriouſly accompliſhed by the death and exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt; it is actually executed by the miniſtry of the goſpel, and the effuſion of the Holy Spirit, whereby Satan's power over men is aboliſhed, the new heavens and the new earth eſtabliſhed; wherein are heard a loud voice, ſaying, 'Now is come ſalvation and ſtrength, the 'kingdom of our God, and the power of his Chriſt †.'

Behold his reward is with him, &c. The Lord God, at his coming to reſcue his kingdom from the hands of his enemies, was abundantly to recompenſe his

* John xii. 31. † Rev. xii. 9.

his faithful ſervants, who, expecting his ſalvation, had ſuſtained many difficulties and trials, and borne the burden in the heat of the day. The truth is, he comes for the purpoſe of conferring upon them the rich rewards of his grace, the precious bleſſings contained in his promiſes, the earneſts of eternal ſalvation. Of old, God had promiſed to his church among other things, that the kingdom of darkneſs ſhould be deſtroyed, that the knowledge of his glory ſhould cover the whole earth, and that his name ſhould be ſanctified among all nations. And now that God was about to ſhew his ſalvation unto all people, according to his faithful word, his ſervants were to receive the full recompenſe of their faith and hope. On this account, they are introduced celebrating his praiſes, 'ſaying, We give thee thanks, 'O Lord God Almighty, who art and waſt, and 'art to come; becauſe thou haſt taken to thee 'thy great power, and haſt reigned *.'—*And his work before him.*' He had a full view of the arduous enterprize which he was about to perform; he ſurveyed at once its commencement, progreſs, and conſummation, the obſtacles that lay in his way, and the glorious ſucceſs with which it was to be accompanied. For the glory, the honour, and the joy which God our Saviour had in proſpect, he endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame; he triumphed over all his enemies, and vanquiſhed every oppoſition. Well, then, doth it become us to adopt the words of Zacharias, when filled with the Holy Ghoſt, ſaying, 'Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael; for he hath vi-'ſited and redeemed his people—To perform the 'mercy promiſed to our fathers, and to remember 'his holy covenant †,' &c.

11 He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd: he ſhall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his boſom, *and* ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young.

* Rev. xi. 17. † Luke i. 7, 8. *et ſeq.*

Having repreſented the righteouſneſs and power of Jehovah diſplayed toward his enemies, in the redemption of his church, the Prophet proceeds to give a beautiful deſcription of his wonderful clemency, tender affection, and peculiar care of his people; eſpecially under the new and better diſpenſation of his grace. Iſaiah, whom no writer has ſurpaſſedin ſublimity, when he amplifies his diſcourſe; or in propriety, when his aim is to illuſtrate, ſpeaks of them under the familiar pleaſing image of a flock. His ſentiments and imagery, taken from this well known object, are admirably adapted to give an agreeable, expreſſive, and elegant view of the diverſified ſcene which he delineates. Under the figurative deſignation of a flock, are compriſed all the choſen, called, and faithful, of every condition, and in every age, who know our Lord's voice and follow him, who reſign themſelves to his conduct, protection, and government.—Thoſe whom he hath ſelected from his unbounded dominions, to be a peculiar people for himſelf, and ſeparated from the world that lieth in wickedneſs, by his redeeming grace and ſanctifying Spirit. How aſtoniſhing his favour and condeſcenſion! how extraordinary the teſtimony of his love! They are weak and defenceleſs, expoſed to the cunning artifices and powerful aſſaults of many inſidious enemies. They are ſubject to many diſtempers, and expoſed to many dangers; timid, and apt to go aſtray. In ſuch circumſtances, the Lord God, to whom of right they pertain, vouchſafes to feed them like a ſhepherd. The authority of a prince arrayed in royal apparel, the majeſty of God clothed with glory and honour, is ſweetly attempered by the gentleneſs of a ſhepherd, in the habit of condeſcenſion and love, What returns of gratitude, of obedience, and every virtue, doth ſuch an obligation demand!

The Lord God is ſometimes ſpoken of in the ſcriptures both of the Old and the New Teſtament, under this amiable character, which is ſuited to impart both inſtruction and conſolation. He is the *one* Shepherd mentioned

mentioned by Ezekiel, to whom alone belongs the flock, and the paſtures wherein they are fed.—The *good* Shepherd, who faithfully performs every part of his office, and who laid down his life for the ſheep. —The *great* Shepherd, who poſſeſſes infinite dignity, and immenſe ability, for diſcharging his whole work. —The *chief* Shepherd, from whom all who ſuſtain the character derive their authority and qualifications, and to whom they ſhall give account of themſelves and the flock he hath entruſted to their care. —In performing the paſtoral office, he *conducts* his flock by his providence, word, and Spirit, to thoſe green paſtures which are beſt ſuited to their various circumſtances, where they have all things neceſſary to life and godlineſs. He *defends* them from thoſe powerful enemies that would moleſt and deſtroy them. He amply *provides* for their nouriſhment and comfort, giving them not only the meat that periſheth, to ſupport their frail bodies, but that which endureth to everlaſting life, to ſatisfy their ſpiritual deſires. I ſhall not, however, attempt to trace out the reſemblance in all its extent; but ſome parts of it are ſo ſtriking, that to overlook them would betray groſs inſenſibility, or perverſe contempt of the divine condeſcenſion. Nor ſhall I by fanciful alluſions ſtrain this beautiful paſſage, to expreſs what the ſacred writer did not mean to intimate. I confeſs, with an eminent author, that I have never met with any image ſo pleaſing and delightful, as the deſcription of the Lord God in the character of a ſhepherd.

Like a faithful ſhepherd, he tends his flock with the utmoſt care and vigilance. Amidſt the infinite variety of circumſtances in which they are placed, with the moſt ſolicitous attention he accommodates himſelf to their ſeveral neceſſities, ſo that not ſo much as one of them ſhall be loſt, or lack any good thing. He ſeaſonably ſupplies every want, he reſolves every doubt, he directs in every difficulty; he hath promiſes adapted to every condition, armour to furniſh them againſt every foe, reſtoratives for every weakneſs,

neſs, medicine for every diſtemper, and food ſuited to every taſte, which he liberally diſpenſes on every proper occaſion. To the ſimple he imparts wiſdom, to the poor riches, and the lowly he exalts to honour. Every where, and in all things, he teaches them how to abound, ſhewing them the way wherein they ought to walk, and the work they ought to do. In every ſtate his unremitting care of them and all their intereſts, is wonderfully diſplayed, and in the greateſt ſtraits he manifeſts the greateſt attention. Many inſtances of this comfortable truth might be adduced. When the patriarch Jacob was terrified at the approach of his brother Eſau with four hundred armed men, he was bleſſed and encouraged by the Lord, who appeared to him. Whilſt the apoſtle Peter was detained in priſon, under a ſtrong guard, the Lord ſent and delivered him from the hand of Herod, and the expectation of the Jews.—My brethren, how many ſeaſonable deliverances did he work for you, even before you were acquainted with him? Often did he reſcue you from the jaws of deſtruction, before you thought of craving his protection; and ever ſince you obeyed his voice, his eye is continually upon you, his ear is open to your cry, and his everlaſting arms are ſtretched out to ſupport and embrace you.—This leads me to obſerve, that

Like a good ſhepherd the Lord God feeds his flock, with the moſt tender regard and compaſſion. He is gracious and full of pity; and, that he might perform this kind office, he aſſumed not only the likeneſs, but the infirmities of our nature; he became poor, that through his poverty we might be made rich; he poured out his ſoul unto death, to obtain our redemption. And as it was expedient he ſhould leave this earth, that by his perſonal preſence in heaven he might ſecure the final ſalvation of his people, and prepare manſions of glory for their reception, he hath aſſured us of the perpetual reſidence of the Holy Spirit, to lead us unto all truth, to feed us with his rod, and to comfort our hearts. When we were

ſinners

ſinners ready to periſh, rebels up in arms againſt him, his bowels yearned toward us, his compaſſion was extended to us, his love that paſſeth knowledge, was wonderfully expreſſed; and, by a kind of merciful violence, he ſnatched us as brands out of the burning. And after we might have ſuſpected, that we had ſtopped the current of his mercy and grace by our ſin and folly, his heart was turned, and his repentings were kindled, and thus he expoſtulated with himſelf, 'How ſhall I give thee up? how ſhall 'I deliver thee? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? 'how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim *?' In every ſituation wherein we are placed, he treats us in the kindeſt and gentleſt manner; when weary and faint in our minds, he ſtrengthens with ſtrength in our ſouls; when we fall, he raiſes us up; when there is little or no expectation of deliverance, he opens the door of hope, and ſends ſalvation. When in apparent imminent danger we exclaim, Maſter, careſt thou not that we periſh? to reſtore peace and ſerenity, he not only diſmiſſes the grounds of the alarm, but he allays the ſtorm of fear and unbelief, whereby we were diſturbed. In this manner doth the Lord manifeſt himſelf the watchful guardian of Iſrael, the compaſſionate ſhepherd of his flock, their keeper, who neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps.—Two circumſtances are ſpecified by our Prophet, which beautifully illuſtrate and confirm the tender mercy and vigilance of our Lord as a ſhepherd.

He ſhall gather the lambs with his arms. By the lambs may be intended, in the figurative ſenſe of the expreſſion, thoſe who are elſewhere denominated little children; the young and the weak, who are remarkable for ſimplicity of manners—The timid and the fearful, who are eaſily alarmed at the approach of enemies, or the proſpect of danger; who ſtart and are terrified when apprehenſive of receiving any injury—The tender and the delicate, who have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat; who, having made but

* Hoſea xi. 8.

but ſmall progreſs in the ſpiritual life, are not eſtabliſhed in knowledge, faith, and holineſs. People of this deſcription, who commit themſelves to the conduct of the great Shepherd of the ſheep, he will graciouſly cheriſh, and treat with peculiar kindneſs, in the exerciſe of his paſtoral office. By his providence and grace, he will ſuſtain and defend them from the evils to which they may be expoſed. When wandering on the mountains of vanity, ready to fall a prey to their enemies, he will bring them home to himſelf, and embrace them with endearing affection, as the objects of his care and compaſſion, in whoſe ſafety and comfort he rejoices. And when, through folly, temptation, or perſecution, they may be ſcattered from the flock, unable to regain their former advantages, he will gather them from their diſperſions, he will carry them in his boſom, and afford them all neceſſary ſuccour and conſolation.

And ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young; or, as the Hebrew words ſignify, *thoſe who give ſuck.* This allegorical deſcription may have particular reference to thoſe who are labouring under infirmities, incumbrances, cares, and ſolicitudes—Who are oppreſſed with an afflicting ſenſe of the guilt and power of ſin, with anxious fears, with difficult ſervices, with the decay of promiſing appearances, and uneaſineſs of various kinds. It may denote thoſe who are mothers in Iſrael, who, having been for long time in the fold of Jeſus Chriſt, and made conſiderable progreſs in the divine life, travail as in birth, until Chriſt be formed in the hearts of others—And thoſe who have been employed in adminiſtering to babes in Chriſt the rational milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.—Such the good Shepherd will gently lead on as they are able to bear, and proportion their ſervices to their circumſtances. He will conduct them beſide the quiet waters of the ſanctuary, in the paths of righteouſneſs, for his name's ſake. When they become feeble, and their ſtrength is ready to fail, he will uphold them by his right hand, and ſtay them with

with his free Spirit. He will take the yoke from off them, when they grow weary; he will lay meat unto them, and ſpeak comfortably to their hearts. He will bear their infirmities, and go before them in the way wherein they ſhould walk; he will never leave nor forſake them, until he conduct them ſafe thro' all the ſteps of this mortal life, to thoſe rich paſtures and living fountains of water, where all tears ſhall be wiped from their eyes.—Deeply ſenſible of our infinite obligations to the Lord God, for his kind affection and tender care, who feedeth the ſtrong, who beareth the weak, and ſuits his manner of acting to the condition of every one of his flock; let us celebrate his wiſdom, compaſſion, and fidelity, whoſe riches are unſearchable, whoſe love paſſeth knowledge, whoſe peace tranſcends underſtanding. Let us reſort to him in every emergency, devolve upon him all our cares, and make known to him all our wants, by prayer with thankſgiving.

12 Who hath meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance?

Our Prophet proceeds to ſhew that the ſpiritual kingdom of God was to be eſtabliſhed on earth, in a manner ſimilar to the works effected by the Almighty, in creation and providence. Having predicted the advent of the Lord God into this world, and deſcribed the nature of the new œconomy which was then to be introduced, he ſuggeſts a ſatisfying reply to the difficulties that might be urged to the ſucceſs of this grand enterprize. To remove any objections that might ariſe relative to this ſubject, he declares that the arduous work was to be accompliſhed by that God, whoſe fooliſhneſs the apoſtle Paul affirms is wiſer than men, whoſe weakneſs is ſtronger than men. His infinite wiſdom and power he highly extols, as fully

fully ſufficient to deſtroy the empire of Satan, to extirpate idolatry, and to effect the converſion of the Gentiles. In the œconomy of man's ſalvation, Jehovah exhibits no leſs illuſtrious proofs of his underſtanding and omnipotence, than in the admirable ſtructure of the univerſe. With noble exultation of mind, in a ſtile truly ſublime, though far inferior to the ſubject of which he treats, Iſaiah enquires,

Who hath meaſured the waters in the hollow of his hand? The waters may be diſtributed into thoſe that are above, and thoſe which are under the firmament, the ſpacious canopy ſtretched out over the earth. How immenſe the quantity of water bound up in the thick clouds, which, according to the ſovereign will of God, are poured down from on high! What immenſe ſtores of waters are contained in the ſeas, in the lakes, in caverns, fountains, and rivers! Though their amount far exceeds the comprehenſion of the moſt enlarged human mind, yet, compared to the infinitude and magnificence of Jehovah, if collected together, ſo ſmall are their dimenſions, that they are as nothing. The Almighty, who meaſured them in the hollow of his hand, perfectly ſees their extent; he exactly aſcertains their bulk and weight, and diſpoſes of them as he judges proper to ſuit the various purpoſes for which they were created. A ſimilar ſublime ſentiment is to be found among the ſayings of Agur the ſon of Jakeh, who thus ſpeaks of the majeſty and glory of Jehovah, as if deeply impreſſed with the inexpreſſible grandeur of the ſubject; 'Who 'hath gathered the wind in his fiſts, who hath bound 'the waters in a garment, who hath eſtabliſhed all 'the ends of the earth *?'

And meted out heaven with the ſpan. The heavens, which preſent themſelves to the view of men, form that immenſe expanſe which far exceeds our moſt enlarged conceptions. They include not only the extenſive atmoſphere, the air, and the clouds, but alſo the higher heavens, wherein are placed thoſe glorious

* Prov. xxx. 4.

glorious luminaries whereby they are garniſhed, enlightned, and highly ornamented. Theſe celeſtial orbs, of different magnitudes, he hath appointed their ſeveral ſtations; he perfectly knows their dimenſions, their diſtances, their proportion, and order. He hath ſo admirably adjuſted them, that they all contribute to the beauty and elegance of the univerſe, whilſt every one ſerves the moſt valuable purpoſes. The heaven in which theſe luminous bodies of prodigious ſize are fixed, or perform their revolutions, and which ſeems to us unbounded, the Almighty hath meted out as with the ſpan, the meaſure which we apply to eſtimate the bulk of objects of ſmall capacity and extent. What a magnificent idea doth this interrogatory convey of the infinite grandeur and power of Jehovah, which is here celebrated! How ſurpaſſingly great muſt be that God, who eaſily and at once accurately aſcertained all the extent of heaven, from the eaſt to the weſt, from the ſouth to the north!

And comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure. It is unneceſſary to endeavour to aſcertain the ſize of the meaſure which the Hebrew word is uſed to ſignify; let it ſuffice to ſay, that it denotes ſuch a ſmall veſſel as men uſed to drink from. The duſt of the earth may ſignify the whole matter of which this terreſtrial globe was compoſed, in the rude ſtate, when it was without form and void, or the various materials of which it is now conſtituted; of all theſe the Lord God hath the moſt intimate knowledge, having given them exiſtence, and exactly arranged them according to his pleaſure. The whole ſum or maſs, compounded of aggregate bodies, ſuch as grain, is commonly eſtimated by meaſure. In reference to this practice, the duſt of the earth, in the view of Jehovah, appears little and inconſiderable, as that which you put into a ſmall veſſel. The expreſſion before us is ſo lofty, that expoſition rather obſcures than illuſtrates it; rather detracts from its ſublimity than adds to its dignity. Our Prophet's imagination was ſtretched to the utmoſt; his mind ſo elevated, and

his ideas of the divine glory ſo magnificent, that the moſt enlarged apprehenſion, and the powers of language cannot illuminate the ſubject.

And weighed the mountains in ſcales, &c. The ſurface of this earth is very uneven, being diverſified by mountains, hills, and valleys. This wonderful variety exhibits an admirable diſplay of the conſummate wiſdom and power of Jehovah, who hath accurately adjuſted their extent and ſituation, their magnitude, proportion, and influence. The mountains and hills attract the vapours that fluctuate in the atmoſphere, which, being condenſed, fall upon the earth in dew, in rain, or ſnow; from them the rivers that run in the valleys take their riſe, and on them the beaſts of the field and the fowls of the air find agreeable ſhelter. They conſpire to give general pleaſure, they augment general utility, they variegate the proſpect, and beautify the face of the earth. Theſe huge maſſes, compoſed of the moſt ſolid materials, were all formed and eſtabliſhed on their baſis with exquiſite ſkill, by the omnipotent arm of the Lord God. Every circumſtance reſpecting them he hath exactly ſettled, inſomuch that he is ſaid to have weighed them. Weighing, in the metaphorical ſenſe, when attributed to God, may denote the act of his infinite underſtanding and power, whereby he hath ſo perfectly poiſed and balanced them, as accurately to aſcertain the nature and quantity of the ſubſtances which they contain, and the moſt proper places that they ſhould occupy. Theſe queſtions in effect determine themſelves, and ſuggeſt this reply. All theſe things are the wonderful works of Jehovah, who is perfect in knowledge, who doeth great things and unſearchable, marvellous, and without number. O Lord, how great are thy works, thy thoughts are very deep.

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counſellor hath taught him?

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The glory of the ſtupendous works of God is due to him alone, and none have right to participate with him in the honour which he juſtly claims. That I may not darken counſel by words without knowledge, and multiply them on a ſubject I might rather render obſcure than illuminate, I ſhall ſhortly ſtate the import of the queſtions aſked in this and the following verſe, which have the force of the moſt decided negatives.—Who hath narrowly ſcanned and thoroughly ſearched the eternal omnipreſent Spirit of Jehovah, and penetrated into the nature of his exiſtence, and the manner of his operations? Who hath directed him, who in the beginning moved on the face of the waters, who garniſhed the heavens, who reneweth the face of the earth, who inſpired the prophets, and reſides in the faithful? Who hath aſſiſted him in eſtabliſhing the beautiful order of the univerſe, in conſtructing and uniting all the different parts whereof it is conſtituted, ſo that every thing acts rather in its preſent mode than in any other. The apoſtle Paul, writing to the Romans, ſeems to allude to the words under conſideration, when having treated of the counſel of God in rejecting the Jews, and ſubſtituting the Gentiles in their place he pathetically exclaimed, 'O the depth of the riches both of 'the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearch-'able are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who 'hath been his counſellor *.' Our Prophet's words are,

Or being his counſellor, hath taught him. A counſellor is one whoſe wiſdom, prudence, and experience enables him to give advice and direction in difficult matters; who, according to his beſt judgment, points out the way whereby the moſt important ends may be attained. Who ever acted in this manner toward the all-wiſe God? Poſſeſſed of infinite underſtanding, and clothed with ſupreme authority, he never needs any direction or inſtruction. The wiſeſt and greateſt men that

* Rom. xi. 35, 36.

that ever lived upon earth, ſenſible that they needed advice, have had their counſellors; but none ever directed the omniſcient God in the execution of his purpoſes, or in the adminiſtration of his government. When the counſels of his will were ſettled, when the plan of his operations were formed, there was no creature in exiſtence who aſſiſted him in framing the model of his wonderful works. Who then ever taught the Spirit of the Lord, from whom alone all ſound wiſdom proceeds?

14 With whom took he counſel, and *who* inſtructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed to him the way of underſtanding?

To repreſs the pride of human knowledge, to amplify the ſubject, and to illuſtrate the perfect wiſdom of Jehovah, Iſaiah again enquires, *With whom took he counſel?* to whom did he ever apply, in the moſt critical circumſtances, on the moſt momentous occaſion, for advice and direction?—*Who inſtructed him* how to perform any of his works of creation or providence? *Who taught him in the path of judgment*, the laws whereby he governs the univerſe, and the laws he hath inſcribed on the minds of men; or the truths, the inſtitutions, and precepts revealed in his holy word? —*Who taught him knowledge, &c.* and informed him of the cauſes whereby effects are produced, their order, connection, and operation?—*And ſhewed to him the way of underſtanding*, whereby he might arrange and conduct all his variegated diſpenſations, ſo as to terminate in his own glory? His perfect knowledge and conſummate wiſdom, render him altogether independent of the creatures he hath made, who cannot fully comprehend and explain the works that he hath done. Many of them are high above, and out of ſight; and of thoſe which come under our view, a ſmall portion only is ſeen. Would it not, then, be

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the greateſt preſumption and abſurdity, for any one to pretend he hath inſtructed the Spirit of the Lord?

In the admirable ſtructure of the univerſe, in the beautiful order and ſymmetry of all its parts, and in every work of divine providence, we contemplate ſignal diſplays of infinite underſtanding and conſummate wiſdom. This perfect knowledge, this exquiſite ſkill, manifeſt in all the operations of the Almighty, is underived, and proceeds from the ſupreme excellence of his own nature, and not from any other ſource whatſoever. The works and ways of God far tranſcend the capacity of human minds; for as the heavens are above the earth, ſo are God's thoughts and ways above our thoughts and ways. What extreme arrogance and pride, then, do men diſcover, who refuſe to ſubmit to that œconomy of grace which God hath eſtabliſhed, becauſe it contains many things which at firſt ſight appear paradoxical and inexplicable. Is not all nature ſtored with wonders which we cannot explain. If the ſame cauſe uniformly produces ſimilar effects, who can doubt that the conſtitution of the kingdom of the Son of God, in many reſpects accords with that of the natural world, which contains many aſtoniſhing wonders. Notwithſtanding, this diſpenſation of mercy proved an offence to the Jews, who were ſo irritated and inflamed with rage againſt the goſpel, that they hated and perſecuted them that believed it; whilſt the heathen contemned the doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt, which they held to be fooliſhneſs. Never were inſtructions communicated to mankind, at which they have diſcovered ſtronger averſion, than thoſe revealed by the Spirit of God, of which this is in part the ſum, that all fleſh is as graſs; that no man can be juſtified before God by his own works; and that the obedience, ſufferings, and death of Jeſus Chriſt, is the only meritorious cauſe of ſalvation. Though theſe doctrines were moſt unlikely to meet with a favourable reception from the world, to deſtroy the empire of Satan, and to reſtore righteouſneſs and peace to the human race; yet

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by means of them the Spirit of God ſubdues the pride of man, brings to nought the wiſdom of the wiſe, that no fleſh may glory in his preſence. We therefore affirm, that the goſpel œconomy is the work of the Holy Spirit, whereby the glory of Jehovah is diſplayed, and the nobleſt purpoſes accompliſhed.

15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance: behold, he taketh up the iſles as a very little thing.

It might be objected to the new diſpenſation of grace, that it was introduced by the Spirit of the Lord God, in a manner quite different from that dictated by the wiſdom of this world, and inconſiſtent with thoſe human inventions in religion, by which the nations imagined they had diſcovered much wiſdom and ſagacity. To this objection it is replied, that all the devices which men have framed, are of no avail in the ſight of God for obtaining ſalvation, and that no man can appear before his dread tribunal with ſafety and confidence, but only in virtue of the word of grace, the wiſdom of the Spirit, and the righteouſneſs of the Meſſiah.—*Behold, the nations are as a drop*, &c. How inſignificant are all the kingdoms of the earth in the preſence of Jehovah, how inconſiderable when brought into compariſon with the infinite excellence and glory of God! Contraſted with his divine perfections, their wiſdom is folly, their power weakneſs, their righteouſneſs undeſerving, and all their performances tainted by corruption and depravity. The drop that adheres to the bucket is ſo ſmall and ſo light, that it hath not the leaſt perceptible influence on the weight of the veſſel, whether it be full or empty. The ſmall duſt that cleaves to the beam or the ſcales, hath not the leaſt influence to incline the balance to either ſide, and ſo is totally overlooked and neglected. By this beautiful ſimilitude is repreſented the inſignificance of all the

the kingdoms of this world, when viewed in relation to the Moſt High. Their boaſted wiſdom and knowledge, ſupported often on wrong principles, falſe prejudices and errors, is not ſo much to the infinite wiſdom of God, and is more inconſiderable in his view, than the drop on the bucket. Their religion and virtue, which originate in the vanity of their minds, and are conducted by corrupt maxims, are unimportant and unprofitable in the ſight of him who ſearcheth the heart, who trieth the reins, and hath pleaſure in uprightneſs. Their immenſe numbers, their prodigious extent of power, influence, and territory, are as nothing before Almighty God.—*Behold, he taketh up the iſles as a very little thing.* Not only the leſſer, but the larger iſlands, ſuch as that whereon we live, with all their numerous inhabitants, and whatſoever they contain, the Lord God taketh up and ſuſtains, with infinitely greater eaſe than we can remove the ſmalleſt object. All the iſlands of the ſea are no more to him than a very little thing that floats in the air, which is deſtitute of ſolidity, and makes no reſiſtance to what lays hold of it. Theſe large ſolid bodies, and thoſe who reſide upon them, with their laws, their philoſophy, their literature, and ſuperſtitious rites, all theſe are of no eſtimation in God's ſight. There is no intrinſic excellence or value in them, which approves itſelf to his all-penetrating judgment.

16 And Lebanon *is* not ſufficient to burn, nor the beaſts thereof ſufficient for a burnt-offering.

Such is the infinite majeſty and glory of God, that the moſt excellent and coſtly ſacrifices cannot add to his felicity, nor make expiation for ſin. Mount Lebanon was anciently celebrated for the ſweet ſpices and noble cedars which it produced, and the fine cattle to which it yielded rich paſturage. On theſe accounts it may be here mentioned, to intimate, that all the large timber, all the fragrant incenſe, and all

all the fat beaſts that it could furniſh, could not make one offering worthy of the divine acceptance. The ſentiment contained in the words before us ſeems to be this, that all the oblations preſented to the Moſt High, by Jews or Gentiles, however numerous and magnificent, were altogether inſufficient to make expiation for ſin. Though all the beaſts of the foreſts, all the cattle upon a thouſand hills—though all the wood that grew on Lebanon, Hermon, and Baſhan, had been employed to conſume them, they could not atone for tranſgreſſion, they could not avert the divine diſpleaſure, or procure the favour of God. Sacrifices and burnt-offerings cannot bring men into the preſence of Jehovah with acceptance, they cannot acquit from guilt, or render mens ſervices well-pleaſing to the Lord. Though they conſtituted part of that homage which God demanded from his people of old, yet, when they were truſted to as the ground of juſtification, or ſubſtituted in the room of moral duties, and not conſidered in reference to the perfect propitiation of Jeſus Chriſt, they were rejected as frivolous and vain. The demands of the divine juſtice were not ſatisfied; conſcience, when well informed, was not appeaſed; God did not graciouſly regard them. He hath provided and revealed in the goſpel the ſacrifice of his own Son, infinitely more excellent and worthy of his acceptance. This is the only ranſom that is pleaſing to him, the one perfect offering, in virtue of which alone men can obtain favour of the Lord.—Let us, then, take heed that we place not our dependence on any thing elſe than the ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, through which are to be enjoyed pardon of ſin, victory over enemies, union with the centre of all excellence, and the all-ſufficient God for our friend and portion.

17 All nations before him *are* as nothing, and they are counted to him leſs than nothing and vanity.

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Having repreſented the meanneſs and inſignificance of the nations, compared with the grandeur of God, our Prophet reſumes the ſubject, which he deſcribes in yet ſtronger terms than he had formerly done. He teaches not only that merit is to be entirely diſclaimed by all fleſh, but that all thoſe things which people had deviſed to appeaſe the Deity, were nugatory and vain, that they had not the ſmalleſt influence to recommend them to the favour of God; yea, that they were leſs than nothing and vanity. The language is ſo ſublime, ſo forcible, that it is impoſſible to ſay any thing more expreſſive of the infinitude of Jehovah, and the vanity of man. Indeed, the ſmalleſt drop of liquid that adheres to the point of a needle, the leaſt particle of duſt that cleaves to the balance, bears a greater proportion to the vaſt ocean, and to the heavens and the earth, than all the nations of the world to the bleſſed God. Nay, could we conceive leſs than nothing, we might have a more adequate idea of the infinite diſproportion betwixt the Almighty and all the kingdoms on the face of the globe, and the utter inſufficiency of all that they have contrived to pacify his offended Majeſty.—Such, then, is the grandeur of God; ſuch is the meanneſs and vanity of man. How imperfect ſoever the ſketch now given, it may convince us, that though the language here employed is truly ſublime, it is not hyperbolical; that it is always within the truth, and never beyond it. O Lord my God, thou art exceeding great, and before thee we ſhrink into nothing. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praiſed; his greatneſs is unſearchable. 'What is man, that thou 'ſhouldſt magnify him, that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine 'heart upon him, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every 'morning, and try him every moment *?'

18 To whom, then, will ye liken God? or what likeneſs will ye compare unto him?

* Job vii. 17, 18.

The general practice of idolatry, to which the Gentiles had long been addicted, and the powerful ſupport it had received from the great men of the world, might give riſe to ſeveral doubts reſpecting the poſſibility of erecting the kingdom of God upon earth, by means of the preaching of the goſpel, unaided by arms and human policy. To remove every difficulty of this ſort, Iſaiah demonſtrates the folly and vanity of idolatry, from the materials of which images are made, the ſhape in which they are formed, and the manner of their fabrication, compared with the nature, the excellence, and glory of God, the Creator of the univerſe.—And from the weakneſs of thoſe princes who were the chief ſupports of this abominable ſyſtem, contraſted with the power and wiſdom of the Governor among the nations, who can do whatſoever he pleaſeth. To guard the poſterity of Iſrael againſt this odious practice, he aims to convince them, that it is impoſſible to form any adequate reſemblance of the only true God, who cannot be repreſented by any ſimilitude whatſoever.—Thoſe who firſt formed images of God, endeavoured by ſome figure to exhibit a picture or ſtatue of the divinity whom they profeſſed to venerate, vainly imagining that the deities whom they worſhipped were like the idols they had framed. In proceſs of time, through the natural blindneſs of men and growing ſuperſtition, people adopted the extravagant notion, that the ſtatues to which they paid homage were really gods, and by this name they were called. The groſs abſurdity of this opinion is here expoſed to contempt by theſe pertinent queſtions; 'To whom will ye liken God,' who is inviſible, whom no man hath ſeen, or can ſee? 'What likeneſs will ye compare unto him,' to whom there is none like? Since all nations before him are leſs than nothing and vanity, to whom, or to what in the wide creation will you reſemble him? Specify, if you can, any perſon or object that may give a proper repreſentation of him. Profeſſing yourſelves to be wiſe, ye become fools, by changing the glory of the

the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man; or to birds, to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Man was no doubt formed at first after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures; but who does not perceive, that he exhibits a very limited imperfect representation of his Creator? Since, then, the Most High God is incomparably excellent and glorious, let us serve him with awful reverence, deeply affected with his astonishing condescension who hath respect to the lowly; and with admiring thoughts of his love, power, and faithfulness, who is exalted above all blessing and praise.

19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains

Those in affluent circumstances, who were addicted to idolatry, are described employing tradesmen of different occupations, to form and beautify for their use images of various kinds. The founder begins the work by melting in the furnace the metal whereof the idol is to be made, and then giving it that mould or shape which is most agreeable to his employer. After he hath done his part, the goldsmith overlays it with gold, that it may seem as if framed of the most precious materials, and that having a more brilliant appearance, it may attract greater admiration and respect. He also makes silver chains for it, wherewith it may be fastened to some place in the inner chamber, where the household gods were commonly set, or be suspended to the wall or cieling. Perhaps some of them were intended for ornament.

20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree *that* will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image *that* shall not be moved.

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The poorer, the more frugal and covetous ſort of people, imitate the example of the rich; but indigence and avarice does not permit them to go ſuch extravagant lengths in point of expence. Though unable to bring a coſtly offering of ſilver or gold, they muſt nevertheleſs have idols made of cheap materials to ſet up in their houſes. For this purpoſe the poor man pitches on a piece of ſolid durable timber, ſuch as cedar or oak, and applies to ſome ingenious tradeſman to make thereof a curious beautiful image, that may not ſoon require to be removed and to be replaced by another.—How juſt, how ſuitable are the words of the devout Pſalmiſt in that elegant hymn wherein he requeſts the Almighty to glorify himſelf in the ſalvation of his church! Should the idolater aſk, Where is now your God? we reply, 'Our 'God is in the heavens,' &c. How ſtriking the contraſt formed in the 115th Pſalm, between the true God and idols of the heathen! Our God made the world and all that are therein; idols are made by the hands of men. He is in the heavens, highly exalted above the powers of nature, and the kingdoms of this earth; they occupy ſome very narrow ſpace here below. He doeth whatſoever pleaſeth him; they can do nothing at all. He ſeeth the diſtreſſes, he anſwereth the prayers, accepteth the ſacrifices, cometh to the aſſiſtance, and effecteth the ſalvation of his ſervants; they are blind, deaf, and dumb, ſenſeleſs, motionleſs, and impotent, and incapable of affording relief in the greateſt extremity *.

21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not underſtood from the foundations of the earth?

Having deſcribed the abſurd practices of idolaters, our Prophet next adminiſters a ſharp reproof for their extreme folly and ſenſeleſſneſs.—The ſeveral

* See Dr Horne on the 115th Pſalm.

ral queſtions which he aſks have a direct reference to the formation of the earth, mentioned in the latter part of the verſe. The foundations whereof he ſpeaks may denote its firſt beginnings or origin, how it was brought into exiſtence, how it emerged from the chaos, out of which it was formed, how its various component parts were diſpoſed and united together. The eſtabliſhment of this earth, which ſtands faſt and cannot be removed, was not effected by human power, but by a ſuperior intelligent omnipotent being.—*Have ye not known?* After enjoying many opportunities of being acquainted with the moſt important facts, are you ignorant that he who built all things is God? that he who is infinite in power and in every perfection, is the firſt cauſe by which all things were called into exiſtence? and that he created and arranged the ſtupendous ſtructure of the univerſe?—*Have ye not heard?* If you have not acquired this knowledge by means of your own ſtudy and inveſtigation, have you not been informed by thoſe employed to inſtruct you on important intereſting ſubjects, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?—*Hath it not been told you*, &c. by men of cultivated minds and unqueſtionable veracity, that according to tradition tranſmitted from age to age, ſince the commencement of time, this earth was formed by the eternal God, for whoſe pleaſure all things are, and were created? If you have not derived this knowledge from any of theſe channels, your own reaſon might have taught you, that this world owes its exiſtence to an all-perfect glorious Being, who is infinitely ſuperior to all material ſubſtances, ſuch as thoſe whereof your images are made. 'The inviſible things of God from the creation of 'the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the 'things that are made, even his eternal power and 'Godhead; ſo that you are without excuſe if you 'glorify him not as God *.' Blind and ſenſeleſs, then, you muſt be, if you make idols of gold, and ſilver,

* Rom. i. 20, 21.

ſilver, and timber, and imagine them to have created the earth.

22 *It is* he that ſitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as graſshoppers; that ſtretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and ſpreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

The great God is repreſented in theſe lofty expreſſions, as exalted far above all the inhabitants of the earth, who act under his inſpection, and are ſubject to his authority. What a grand majeſtic idea doth theſe words convey to the mind, of the omnipotent Jehovah, of his divine perfections, the immenſity of his preſence, the infinitude of his knowledge, and the univerſal extent of his dominion! Imagination faints under the preſſure of this boundleſs ſubject, which is by far too great for the human mind. I will not, I cannot illuſtrate it; the object is too high for me; I cannot underſtand. Who can forbear to exclaim, in the words of the ſacred poet, 'Who is like 'unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high *?' —*The inhabitants thereof are as graſshoppers.* The whole human race, with all the advantages they poſſeſs, and all their aſſumed importance, are only as inſignificant inſects before the mighty God. They appear ſmall, mean, contemptible creatures, conſtantly in motion to obtain what they apprehend neceſſary to their ſupport and accommodation.—*That ſtretcheth out the heavens as a curtain*, &c. which form a magnificent canopy over the whole earth—that ſpreadeth out the vaſt expanſe of the firmament, enlightened by the ſpacious orbs ſuſpended in it; and the heaven of heavens, wherein the Moſt High God, with angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, have their peculiar reſidence. Theſe heavens the Lord God framed and extended with more eaſe than men can conſtruct a tent or draw aſide a curtain. The loweſt he

* Pſal. cxiii. 5.

he formed to be a ſplendid covering to our dwelling place, the higher to be a tabernacle for the ſun and the other luminaries which adorn the ſky, and the higheſt to be the habitation of his glory, and of the innumerable multitudes that ſurround his throne.—From this wonderful work of Almighty God, Iſaiah deduces a powerful argument to confute the fooliſh practices of idolaters. Since the only true and living God hath exhibited ſuch aſtoniſhing diſplays of his majeſty, immenſity, and omnipotence, in the formation, preſervation, and government of the univerſe, nothing can be more irrational and abſurd than worſhipping and ſerving idols of ſilver and gold, the work of mens hands, and placing that confidence in the creature which is only due to the Creator.

23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

Another ſtriking proof is here adduced that the Moſt High God is the ſupreme governor of the world. According to his ſovereign pleaſure he diſpoſes of perſons poſſeſſing the higheſt dignity, authority, and influence; and in ſome inſtances he reverſes their former elevated condition.—*Princes* is the deſignation oftentimes given to men of diſtinguiſhed rank, who occupy ſtations next to thoſe who are inveſted with ſupreme power. Sometimes the title is given to thoſe who are altogether kings, the chief men in the ſtate, whoſe office is to govern the empire, to defend it againſt enemies, to execute the laws, and to diſtribute juſtice among the people. Even thoſe who are exalted to ſuch honourable characters, and poſſeſs extenſive power, God bringeth to nothing. He precipitates them from the ſummit of grandeur and power they had attained, and deprives them of their boaſted dignity and authority. In ſome inſtances he hath excluded them, with their poſterity, from all proſpect of ever regaining the high ſtation that they filled, ſuddenly cutting them off by ſome awful judgment. In this manner was Pharaoh king of Egypt,

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Senacherib king of Aſſyria, with many others, diveſted of their thrones and empires, and brought to nothing. By ſuch ſurpriſing diſplays of ſovereignty and omnipotence, doth the Moſt High over all the earth, convert the greateſt proſperity into the moſt humiliating diſtreſs, and demonſtrate the inſtability of all worldly greatneſs.

He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. The office of judges conſiſts chiefly in examining and deciding with impartiality the cauſes which are brought before them, and in adminiſtering juſtice according to the laws. Perſons acting in this capacity, who execute with fidelity and equity the important truſt repoſed in them, have juſt claim to high reſpect and all neceſſary ſupport. Notwithſtanding, to puniſh their iniquities, and the ſins of thoſe over whom they were inveſted with authority, in ſome caſes God maketh them as vanity. He diveſts them of wiſdom, penetration, and judgment; in conſequence of which they become vain, proud, and wicked; and inſtead of being ſubſtantial bleſſings to the community, they become ſevere ſcourges, whereby they are greatly diſtreſſed. Far from gratifying the deſires and expectations of thoſe who looked up to them for equitable deciſions, they practiſe deceit, falſehood, and unrighteouſneſs, and thus prove the bane of that ſociety whoſe rights they ought invariably to have maintained.—Memorable inſtances of this ſort might be adduced from ſacred and profane hiſtory, were they neceſſary to confirm the truth we have been conſidering. The annals of almoſt every nation in the world give teſtimony to what is here aſſerted, and clearly ſhew that God doth ſet the wicked in ſlippery places, and caſts them down into deſtruction *; that he cuts off the ſpirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth †. How uncertain, how mutable is worldly pomp and ſplendor! how precarious the proſperity of the wicked! how ſoon is their joy turned into ſorrow, their honour into diſgrace, by him that putteth down one, and ſetteth up another.

24 Yea,

* Pſal. lxxiii. 18. † Pſal. lxxvi. 12.

24 Yea, they ſhall not be planted; yea, they ſhall not be ſown; yea, their ſtock ſhall not take root in the earth: and he ſhall alſo blow upon them, and they ſhall wither, and the whirlwind ſhall take them away as ſtubble.

The great perſonages whom God bringeth to nothing, are here ſpoken of in figurative language, as ſtately trees, which having grown to a prodigious height, are remarkable for beauty, and for giving ſhelter to various kinds of animals. In reference to this well known ſimilitude, the Prophet declares, that when God lays them low, nothing of their former dignity ſhall remain, or be reſtored to them; yea, their remembrance ſhall periſh from the earth. This total extermination is forcibly expreſſed in various terms, which are ſo placed as to form a beautiful gradation. Though the ſupreme Lord of all bring them to nothing, it might be imagined, that ſome ſhoot or branch ſprung from the ſame ſtock, might be planted in the earth, and grow up to conſiderable eminence, in place of that which was cut down. Or, it might happen, that ſome of the ſeeds that fell from the tree, upon the earth, might ſpring up, and produce a new plant that would increaſe into a large tree, of the ſame kind and ſize with the former. Or, it might come to paſs, that the lofty tree which was cut down might, from its remaining root, ſend forth new ſhoots, ſome of which, in proceſs of time, might reach as great eminence as that which had been taken away. None of theſe ſuppoſitions, however, were to take place for it is added, *God ſhall blow upon them*, by the powerful influence of his Spirit, who is ſaid at the 7th verſe, to blow upon all fleſh, which is as graſs. He ſhall make them feel the irreſiſtible power of his diſpleaſure, whereby they ſhall be ſuddenly driven from their ſtation, which they ſhall not be able to reſume. Though they appeared to thoſe who obſerved them, to ſpread like a green bay tree, and to be firmly eſtabliſhed in

their places, yet the Almighty by the operations of his word, providence, and Spirit, ſhall cauſe them to wither and decay. They ſhall quickly be conſumed, and periſh.—*As the whirlwind*, &c. which blows with great violence, in a circular direction, ſtrongly agitates every thing within its reach, and throws them out of their places; in like manner, the tempeſt of God's anger ſhall drive wicked great men from their ſtation, with equal eaſe as the whirlwind or ſtorm ſcatters the dry and light ſtubble.

Suppoſing that we now perceive the import of the words, let us next attend to the deſign for which they are introduced. They are intended to ſhew, that none who are called gods are worthy to be compared to the living and true God, of whom it is altogether abſurd to form any reſemblance, and therefore that idolatry is vain and fooliſh in the extreme.—That the God of Iſrael is infinitely more excellent, and highly exalted above the princes and judges of the earth, who are honoured with the name of gods; that he diveſts them of their dignity, and caſts them down root and branch in one day. Many inſtances of this kind are recorded in hiſtory; ſome very remarkable ones are mentioned in Scripture. The Chaldeans took Zedekiah king of Judah captive, they ſlew his ſons in his ſight, they put out his eyes, they bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. The Roman hiſtorians relate, that in the flouriſhing ſtate of the commonwealth, vanquiſhed princes were dethroned, and dragged in triumph at the chariot-wheels of the conquerors. Such examples as theſe, clearly demonſtrate the truth of what is ſaid in this verſe by the inſpired writer.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or ſhall I be equal? ſaith the Holy One.

Having ſhewn the egregious folly, and the ſtupidity of idolaters, the Prophet, in the name of God, again aſks the queſtions propoſed in verſe 18. nearly

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in the ſame terms, to convince them that there are none in heaven, or in earth, that can either be likened or equalled to Jehovah. There is doubtleſs ſome kind of reſemblance betwixt the faculties of the human mind, and the nature and perfections of God, but that likeneſs cannot be deſcribed by any portrait or image whatſoever. And though according to our ideas, there is ſome ſimilitude betwixt thoſe who are inveſted with offices of diſtinguiſhed dignity, and the characters which are aſcribed to God, yet there are none who bear any proportion to him, and who can claim equality to him. Indeed, compariſons of this ſort, rather obſcure than illuſtrate the infinite majeſty of God; and therefore to make idolaters ſenſible of their arrogance and impiety, they are challenged to produce any likeneſs, any equal unto him, who is the Holy One; perfectly free from all manner of impurity, who hateth ſin, and loveth righteouſneſs, who dwelleth in light inacceſſible, and full of glory, and by the excellence and ſublimity of his nature, is highly exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created theſe *things*, that bringeth out their hoſt by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatneſs of his might, for that *he is* ſtrong in power; not one faileth.

That you be thoroughly convinced of the tranſcendent excellence and glory of the Holy One of Iſrael, attentively ſurvey his wonderful works of creation and providence. Steadily contemplate the celeſtial orbs, all of which, his power formed, and placed in their ſeveral ſtations, and each of which he continually upholds in beautiful order, and you may be ſatisfied that they were not made by one of whom you can form any juſt likeneſs. If you have not learned this important truth, by conſidering the foundations of the earth, you may know it by viewing

ing aright the ſplendid magnificent canopy of heaven. Other creatures look downward to the earth, you are ſo formed that you can look up to the heavens with eaſe and pleaſure. Behold them then, ſo as to think of the cauſe whereby they were produced, the purpoſes for which they were deſigned, and the effects which they generate. Conſider who contrived and erected that ſtupendous ſtructure. Theſe immeaſurable heavens, ſurely did not give to themſelves exiſtence, nor were they made by a fortuitous concourſe of atoms. They are the workmanſhip of an eternal, omnipotent, intelligent Being, poſſeſſing infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, whoſe magnificence and glory no terreſtrial object can adumbrate. —The ſubject is amplified with peculiar elegance and beauty in the latter part of the verſe.

That bringeth out their hoſt by number. What an aſtoniſhing diſplay of knowledge and power, far ſurpaſſing human comprehenſion. The Almighty not only brings forth the ſun, who rules by day, but alſo thoſe bright orbs, which glitter by night in the ſpangled firmament on high; not only the larger, but the leſſer ones; and thoſe which on account of their immenſe diſtances, cannot be ſeen but by the aſſiſtance of teleſcopes. The exact number of the celeſtial luminaries, and each individual ſtar that ſhines throughout the whole vault of heaven, the Lord perfectly knoweth, and bringeth them forth every one at his appointed time.—*He calleth them all by names.* Having the moſt accurate acquaintance with their magnitude, their properties, their ſtation, and influence, he cauſes them to know his pleaſure, and to obey his voice.—*Not one faileth* to yield prompt obedience to the laws of the Creator, but every one obſerves the time, the place, the order, infinite wiſdom hath aſſigned to him. Indeed obſervation and experience clearly teach, that all the creatures, animate, and inanimate, in heaven, and on earth punctually obey the commands of the great Lord of all.—This is owing to *the greatneſs of his might*, &c. The eternal

eternal God, not only formed all the hoſt of heaven, but he makes them invariably to obſerve the laws he hath given them with the utmoſt harmony and conſtancy. This is truly aſtoniſhing, and muſt be attributed ſolely to the mighty power of God. By this forcible argument, our Prophet expoſes the folly and vanity of idolatry, which is one chief obſtacle that obſtructs the advancement of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt by the preaching of the goſpel.—Dearly beloved, flee from idolatry, is the exhortation of an apoſtle, with which I conclude this article, and preſs your compliance with the deſign of the Prophet in this portion of his diſcourſe. Avoid not only groſs idolatry, but that more refined ſpecies of it; which, though it may appear leſs ſhocking, is not leſs repugnant to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity. Though you render not religious homage to an idol, yet if you love, and ſerve, and truſt to any object, whither in a manner more or leſs abſurd, you put the creature in place of the Creator, you are guilty of idolatry, the folly and wickedneſs of which, we have attempted to expoſe.

27 Why ſayeſt thou, O Jacob, and ſpeakeſt, O Iſrael, my way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is paſſed over from my God?

Iſaiah proceeds to the practical improvement of the above diſcourſe, with a view to conſole the dejected people of God, and to expoſtulate with them reſpecting their unbelief in the gracious preſence and tender care of Jehovah, of which, in various caſes, they are apt to entertain groundleſs ſuſpicions. The complaint which gave occaſion to the following comfortable truths, firſt demands attention.—The words before us, are addreſſed to Jacob and to Iſrael. Theſe were the names of the youngeſt of the patriarch Iſaac's two ſons, and were afterward given to his poſterity, the peculiar people of God, under the former diſpenſation, who typified the church of Jeſus Chriſt under the New Teſtament, comprehending all who

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are Iſraelites indeed, to whom the Lord is truly good. To ſuch this challenge is directed, *Why ſayeſt thou* &c. that all the diſpenſations of providence and grace with which you are connected, appear ſo intricate and inexplicable, that you cannot attain any comfortable acquaintance with them; that God doth not ſeem to regard your condition, and to manifeſt his tender care of you, but acts toward you as if your forlorn circumſtances were unknown to him. This mournful complaint is adopted by them that fear the Lord, on one or other of the three following account: *1ſt*, When they do not perceive the procuring cauſes from whence their troubles proceed. This perplexing circumſtance, greatly increaſes their uneaſineſs, and induces them to requeſt with Job, that God would ſhew them wherefore he contendeth with them.—*2dly*, When they do not diſcover the important purpoſes to which they are eſpecially directed. Uncertainty as to the particular ends which afflictions are ſent to accompliſh, augments not a little the preſſure of diſtreſs, and diſpoſes good people to bemoan themſelves, in the language of the dejected church, 'He hath hedged me about that I can-'not get out*.' I can neither ſee the reaſon, nor the end of my affliction; my way ſeems to be hid from the Lord.—*3dly*, When they do not diſcern what is preſent duty. Notwithſtanding the bleſſed God hath clearly taught in his word, what he requires, yet there are particular ſituations wherein the beſt of men have been perplexed, as to what courſe they ought to follow. In ſuch caſes, they have ſaid with the good king of Judah, we know not what to do; and have lamented that their way was hid from the Lord.

The way of Jacob and Iſrael, may denote, in the figurative ſenſe of the expreſſion, their manner of life, with all the circumſtances of their condition; the temper of their mind, and the tenor of their conduct toward God, under the diſpenſations of his providence; and

* Lam. iii. 7.

and toward men in their ſeveral capacities and relations in life. It compriſes not only the external actions, but the internal operations of the heart, the principles from whence mens conduct proceeds, the ends to which it is directed, and the diſpoſitions whereby it is influenced.—In this ſenſe, the word is often uſed in ſcripture, as where Job acknowleges, 'He knoweth 'the way that I take *.'—Or, the way of Iſrael may ſignify, not the courſe which they purſued, but the diſpenſations of God's providence and grace toward them, his manner of acting with reſpect to them as their God. This is the obvious meaning of the word where the Lord ſaith, by the prophet Ezekiel, 'Hear, 'O Iſrael, is not my way equal †?—According to the former interpretation, the complaint intimates, not that they imagined the omniſcient God, who underſtands mens ways, and compaſſes their paths, was ignorant of their conduct, for an abiding conviction of the divine preſence and inſpection, diſtinguiſhes the ſervants of God, from thoſe who ſay, 'The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither doth the God of 'Jacob conſider.' It only expreſſes the apprehenſion they had, that the Moſt High ſeemed to neglect and diſregard their preſent afflictive circumſtances; that he did not diſplay that vigilance and care of them they were taught to expect, nor afforded them relief agreeable to his promiſe. According to the latter explanation this doleful lamentation may import, that in their view, the Lord did not notice their diſtreſſed condition, that he did not ſhew them tender compaſſion in the time of their calamity, nor granted them expected ſupport and deliverance. In both views the meaning is nearly the ſame.

And my judgment is paſſed over from my God. This complaint does not, I ſuppoſe, charge God with injuſtice in his diſpenſations; for the Almighty will not pervert judgment: it only indicates that the reaſons of the divine procedure toward thoſe who uſed this language were not underſtood. From hence deſpondency and dejection deduced this unfair infe-

rence,

* Chap. xxiii. 10. † Chap. xviii. 25.

rence, that ſufficient grounds could not be aſſigned to vindicate the ways of God. My judgment, my juſt right and cauſe, which I expected on all occaſions, my God would have been attentive to maintain, ſeems to be deſerted by him, and to have paſſed over without his notice. My God, whom I have choſen for my all-ſufficient friend and portion, into whoſe hands I committed all my concerns, no longer regards my deplorable condition, defers to grant my ſupplication, and to extricate me from perplexity and diſtreſs.—Such was the diſconſolate temper of many of the people of God, in the period which immediately preceded the erection of the Meſſiah's kingdom, the overthrow of the empire of Satan, and the extirpation of idolatry. In a ſtate ſomewhat ſimilar to that which hath been deſcribed, doth the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt ſometimes find themſelves, when waiting for the more full manifeſtation of his kingdom, the accompliſhment of his promiſes, and when labouring under afflictions and diſcouragements of various kinds. To you, the following conſolatory diſcourſe is addreſſed.

28 Haſt thou not known? haſt thou not heard, *that* the everlaſting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no ſearching of his underſtanding.

The conſolation adminiſtered in the firſt part of this verſe, is well ſuited to diſmiſs the complaint which it is intended to remove; and that contained in the latter part, is admirably adapted to the circumſtances of thoſe by whom the complaint is preferred, whilſt both are fitted to check deſpondency and incredulity.—*Haſt thou not known*? haſt thou not learned from principles of ſound reaſon and underſtanding, which you ought to have induſtriouſly inveſtigated?—Haſt thou not heard in the inſtructions you have received from your teachers, and from the traditions

traditions of the fathers, to which you ſhould have diligently attended? After having enjoyed many important advantages, having read and heard much concerning God, you ought to be well acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of religion.—The characters here aſcribed to God firſt demand our attention. He is everlaſting, without beginning and without end, Alpha and Omega, the firſt and the laſt, permanent in duration, which cannot be meaſured, augmented, or diminiſhed. When we attempt to trace the exiſtence of God beyond the creation of the world, we loſe ourſelves in the unfathomable depths of eternity. When we endeavour to penetrate the moſt remote futurity, we again loſe ourſelves in the ſame abyſs, and perceive that as God had no beginning, ſo neither can he have any end. Before the heavens were ſtretched out, before the earth was formed, before a compaſs was ſet to the face of the depth, or the mountains were brought forth, even from everlaſting to everlaſting he is God. And after the heavens ſhall be diſſolved, the earth deſtroyed, the mountains conſumed, and there ſhall be no more ſea, he will always be the everlaſting God.—The next deſignation is,

The Lord, who was, who is, and who is to come; the eternal, ſelf-exiſtent, immutable God, who gave exiſtence to the univerſe, and continually upholds all things by the word of his power. Until the days of Moſes, the import of this glorious title, peculiar to the Almighty, was not often uſed, nor, I ſuppoſe, well underſtood. Under this name, expreſſive of infinite majeſty and power, he made himſelf known to his faithful ſervant when he thus ſpake, I AM THAT I AM; and ever ſince that memorable period this hath been his memorial throughout all generations.—*The Creator of the ends of the earth;* who formed not only the middle of the earth, which the Iſraelites reckoned to be the land of Judea, but the whole large ſphere, with its utmoſt extremities, and moſt remote regions. By his omnipotent word he gave being to

this terreſtrial globe, and all that it contains; he gave to every thing, of every kind, its ſhape, ſize, and colour, with all the qualities it poſſeſſes. To every creature he aſſigned its ſituation, he determined the purpoſes it was to ſerve, the revolutions through which it was to paſs; he linked them together in beautiful order, connection, and ſubordination, ſo as to form that aſtoniſhing variety which is conſpicuous throughout the whole earth; and ſtill he continues to preſerve and direct them.—Of this everlaſting God the Lord it is affirmed, that he

Fainteth not, neither is weary. Men become faint and weary, when through great continued exertion, their ſtrength and ſpirits are ſo exhauſted, that they are unable to act any longer, until they are recruited by means of reſt, food, and ſleep. The gods of the heathen were conſidered by their votaries as liable to be tired and fatigued; hence the prophet Elijah, inſulting over the prieſts of Baal when he anſwered them not, bade them 'cry aloud; for either 'he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is in a jour-'ney, or peradventure he ſleepeth, and muſt be a-'waked *.' Though we be furniſhed with matter, with inſtruments, with time, and a plan of operation, yet it often happens, that ere the work be finiſhed we are much exhauſted and very fatigued. In this reſpect the Lord God doth not at all reſemble the creatures that he hath made. After having performed the moſt ſtupendous works, wherein he hath exhibited illuſtrious diſplays of his glory, and having ſuſtained and delivered his church in former ages, he never is ſubject to the ſmalleſt languor or laſſitude. He executes with perfect eaſe the moſt arduous enterpriſes; and after they are accompliſhed, his ſtrength is never in the leaſt impaired, his powers of operation are infinite and inexhauſtible. His hand is not ſhortened that he cannot ſave, nor is he in the ſmalleſt degree weary of ſupporting his people under the preſſure of affliction.

There

* 1 Kings xviii. 27.

There is no ſearching of his underſtanding. Such is the perfection and extent of his knowledge, that nothing can poſſibly eſcape his notice. Such is his conſummate judgment and univerſal intelligence, that we can no more comprehend them than we can meaſure ſpace without limits, or number the days of eternity. What admirable diſplays of the infinitude of God's underſtanding do we contemplate in the divine government, every part of which is ſo adjuſted as to advance the glory of Jehovah, and the benefit of them that love him. How glorioufly is it manifeſted in the work of redemption, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wiſdom and prudence; in ſubduing men unto his obedience, and preſerving them ſafe, amid all their dejections and diſcouragements, to his heavenly kingdom.—The conſideration of theſe characters peculiar to Jehovah, ought to induce his people to patient ſubmiſſion to his will, to conſtant dependence upon him for ſeaſonable relief, who knows beſt at what time, and in what manner, it may be adminiſtered to the higheſt advantage. Such views of God ought to ſilence every murmuring complaint reſpecting the diſpenſations of providence and grace. The eternity, the omnipotence, the immutability, and underſtanding of the Moſt High, ought to diſpel the perplexing fears of his people, and to excite their confidence in his mercy and love. The recollection of the amiable perfections of God, to whoſe ſervice they are devoted; and the reviving aſſurance that he will not fail in due time to afford them all neceſſary ſupport and conſolation, ſhould diſſipate their ſuſpicions and diſquietudes.

29 He giveth power to the faint: and to *them that have* no might he increaſeth ſtrength.

Another ground of comfort to the dejected ſervants of God is here ſuggeſted, namely, that he ſeaſonably imparts neceſſary ſtrength to the weak and infirm, who

who are the peculiar objects of his tender regard and attentive care. Though he may ſeem for a time to neglect them, when conflicting with various diſtempers, and to decline gratifying their expectations, yet he will aſſuredly uphold them, and preſerve their faith from failing. Various cauſes may contribute to reduce the upright among men to the feeble ſtate in which they are repreſented in the words under conſideration; ſuch as bodily diſtreſs, remaining corruptions, the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, the number and atrocity of their ſins, diſquietude of conſcience, diſmaying fears of the divine diſpleaſure, unexpected calamities, diſappointed deſires of promiſed bleſſings, the want of neceſſary divine ſupport, and the weakneſs of grace. On theſe and ſimilar accounts, they become languid, feeble, and faint in their minds. When in this ſtate He who fainteth not, neither is weary, giveth them power, and increaſeth ſtrength. When lamenting with the church of old, that their ſtrength and their hope is periſhed from the Lord, he brings to their remembrance the years of the right hand of the Moſt High, former experiences of his mercy and loving kindneſs. He makes his grace ſufficient for them, and perfects ſtrength in their weakneſs; he cauſes them to revive from their decayed condition; he enables them to repel temptations, to ſuſtain afflictions, to improve privileges, to perform duties, to exerciſe grace, and to make progreſs in the ſpiritual life.—This comfortable truth, of which I have now been treating, is clearly eſtabliſhed in the holy ſcriptures; it is amply confirmed by the experience of the ſaints in all ages, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of thoſe who have no might whereon they depend. Ought not this bleſſed declaration to invigorate us under all our weakneſſes, and to animate us in all our addreſſes to the throne of grace. Let us be inſtant and earneſt in prayer to God, that when weak in ourſelves, he may grant unto us to be ſtrengthened with all might, according to

his

nis glorious power, unto all patience and long-ſuffering, with joyfulneſs.

30 Even the youths ſhall faint and be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall.

The conſolatory truth contained in the preceding verſe, is in theſe words illuſtrated and confirmed, by a circumſtance from whence it derives conſiderable advantage. A ſtriking diſparity is ſpecified to ſubſiſt betwixt thoſe who are in the vigour of their ſtrength, whoſe abilities are unimpaired, and who with the utmoſt alacrity make the greateſt exertions, and the feeble of them that fear the Lord; and the preference is decidedly given in favour of the latter. Young men, though they ſeldom complain of wearineſs and laſſitude, yet if they too long perſiſt in hard labour, or in contending with oppoſition, they feel themſelves not a little fatigued; whereas thoſe who wait upon the Lord far excel them; for by means of all their ſpiritual exerciſes they recover new ſtrength, and acquire greater activity and vigour. The moral inſtruction conveyed by the remark before us ſeems to be, that though young men, through great, long-continued exertion, may grow feeble and faint; yet thoſe who wait on God, and are ſupported by his grace, ſhall be kept from fainting under the greateſt ſufferings and trials. In this reſpect they maintain a conſpicuous ſuperiority to the moſt active and hardy of the ſons of men; they have reſources from whence they derive ſupport and eſtabliſhment, to which ungodly people are entire ſtrangers. Who that looks abroad into the world hath not obſerved this truth remarkably verified? Have not you, brethren, ſeen young, ſtrong, enterpriſing perſons baffled in all their attempts, unable to attain the ends they had in view; whilſt they who have no might, through the grace of the Moſt High, are preſerved from fainting by believing the goodneſs of the Lord, in the land of the living?

31 But

31 But they that wait on the LORD ſhall renew *their* ſtrength; they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall run and not be weary; *and* they ſhall walk and not faint.

The preferable ſtate of the people of God to that of other men is in theſe words beautifully amplified and illuſtrated. Thoſe who are ſpoken of are thus characteriſed in the firſt part of the verſe, *they that wait on the Lord.* This placid diſpoſition of mind always ſuppoſes ſome delay on the part of the great perſon whoſe appearance and interpoſition is expected. It ſtands in direct oppoſition to raſhneſs and precipitancy, which is often introductory to wearineſs, to impatience and fretfulneſs, that frequently terminate in ſhame and confuſion of face. It conſiſts in holy ſerenity of ſoul, ariſing from hearty acquieſcence in the divine good pleaſure, and cordial ſubmiſſion to whatſoever God ſees proper to appoint; united with lively expectation of his mercy, and ſuch ardent deſires after him as the traveller feels for the cooling ſhade, and the hireling for the ſhadows of the evening. It diſpoſes to ſtudy univerſal conformity to the will of the Lord, and a diligent improvement of the inſtituted means, to which he is pleaſed to grant his preſence and bleſſing. As in temporal, ſo in ſpiritual matters, God hath appointed one thing to be the way of attaining to another. The miniſtry of the word, meditation, and prayer, are the means of obtaining the great objects of his peoples deſires; and in this view they aſſiduouſly attend upon them, with the hope of therein meeting with God. Such, if I miſtake not, is the import of waiting on the Lord, of which I have had repeated occaſion to ſpeak in our progreſs through theſe prophecies.—Perſons of this deſcription

Shall renew their ſtrength. Their powers that had been weakened by various diſtreſſes, ſhall recover new life and vigour. Their underſtandings ſhall diſcern more clearly the truths and ways of God; they ſhall

ſhall acquire larger meaſures of practical wiſdom and prudence, and be more habitually inclined than formerly to do the will of the Lord. Being delivered from perplexity and diſquietude, their affections ſhall become more pure and lively, and every part of duty ſhall be performed with greater alacrity. Their ſpiritual ſtrength, which had been much impaired, ſhall be ſo renovated, that they ſhall be thoroughly furniſhed for every good work. Finding their infirmities helped by the Spirit of might, they ſhall take up the croſs aſſigned to them with firmneſs and fortitude, and proceed with freſh vigour in the good ways of the Lord. They ſhall walk in the light of God's countenance; in his name ſhall they rejoice all the day, and in his righteouſneſs ſhall they be exalted; for he is the glory of their ſtrength. Though their beginning was but ſmall, their latter end ſhall greatly increaſe. How reviving the aſſurance! 'Be of good 'courage, then; wait on the Lord, and he ſhall 'ſtrengthen thine heart; wait, I ſay, upon the 'Lord *.'—In conſequence whereof,

They ſhall mount up on wings as eagles, &c. Three different progreſſive motions are here mentioned, deſcriptive of the ſpiritual exerciſes of the ſervants of God.—1ſt, *They ſhall mount up*. Having laid aſide every weight which preſſed them down to the earth, their hearts and affections ſhall riſe toward heaven, ſeeking thoſe things which are above. With unreſtrained freedom, as in their proper element, they ſhall make ſwift progreſs toward thoſe celeſtial objects, to the enjoyment of which they bend their courſe with pleaſure and agility. The elevation of their minds to things ſpiritual and divine is compared to the rapid lofty flight of the eagle. In the lively exerciſe of faith, hope, and delightful contemplation, their affections ſhall ſoar on high toward God, on whom terminates their moſt intenſe deſires and ſupreme delight.—2dly, *They ſhall run and not be weary*. They ſhall proceed with activity and diligence

* Pſal. xxvii. 14.

gence in the way of God's commandments, following hard after him with unremitting aſſiduity, as their chief good and all-ſufficient portion. In this courſe they ſhall perſeveringly hold on, not wearying in well-doing, knowing that in due time they ſhall reap if they faint not.—3dly, *They ſhall walk and not faint.* With a ſteady, uniform, progreſſive pace ſhall they advance in the ways of God, in the practice of piety and juſtice, of mercy and benevolence, ſtudying univerſal conformity to the will of the Lord, in thoughts, words, and actions. Deeply ſenſible of their own inſufficiency, and their need of divine inſtruction and aſſiſtance, they adopt the earneſt requeſt of the man according to God's own heart. 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy precepts, and I 'ſhall keep it unto the end. Give me underſtand-'ing, and I ſhall keep thy law; yea, I ſhall obſerve 'it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the 'path of thy commandments; for therein do I de-'light *.' Thus inſtructed and aſſiſted, they proceed without fainting toward the heavenly and better country. Inſtead of being enfeebled by conſtant exertion, they acquire new life and vigour, they are renewed day by day, they go from ſtrength to ſtrength, until they appear perfect before God in Zion. As bees go from flower to flower, in queſt of proviſion; ſo the faithful go from ordinance to ordinance, from duty to duty, by means of which they attain new degrees of grace and ſtrength, and receive freſh encouragement to go on their way rejoicing.

How reviving the conſolation adminiſtered to the dejected people of God, who, 'though troubled on e-'very ſide, yet are not diſtreſſed, though perplexed, 'yet not in deſpair, perſecuted, but not forſaken, caſt 'down, but not deſtroyed †.' Whilſt other men, furniſhed with many important advantages, languiſh and decay, the ſaints, in conſequence of the divine ſupport afforded them, ſhall hold on their way, whether beſet with thorns or ſtrewed with flowers. Under

* Pſal. cxix. 33, 34, 35. † 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

der the preſſure of affliction, temptation, and weakneſs, the Lord will not forſake them; but in every caſe he will ſupport them by the power of his grace, and a lively ſenſe of his favour. We therefore conclude with the words of the Song for the Sabbath day, 'The righteous ſhall flouriſh like the palm tree, 'he ſhall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; thoſe that 'be planted in the houſe of the Lord ſhall flouriſh in 'the courts of our God *.'—The above predictions or promiſes that have been verified in manifold inſtances in every age of the church, were remarkably accompliſhed at the time the Jews returned from captivity at Babylon; and ſtill more eminently in the apoſtolic age, when the diſciples of the Son of God, being endowed with the Spirit of power, and animated by faith and hope, ſubmitted with amazing fortitude to the moſt terrible calamities. Looking at the things which are not ſeen and eternal, after the illuſtrious example of their divine maſter, and thro' the ſtrength of his grace, they went about doing good, they were eſtabliſhed unblameable in holineſs before God. And we may expect, that in ſome meaſure ſhall theſe gracious aſſurances be fulfilled to us, if we keep mercy, and diligently wait on the God of ſalvation; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

* Pſal. xcii. 12, 13.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

ANOTHER ſection of the firſt diſcourſe in the fourth book of Iſaiah's prophecies is contained in the chapter we are now to conſider, in which he ſuggeſts a very powerful argument to ſhew the vanity and folly of idolatry. The bleſſed God is introduced addreſſing the Gentile nations, that he may convince them of his ſupreme divinity and univerſal government, in oppoſition to the idols which they ſerved. With this ſubject ſeveral digreſſions are intermixed, directed to the church, to evince the abſurdity of honouring thoſe as gods who were ignorant of the moſt important future events. Among the proofs which the true God hath given of his exiſtence and perfections, is the prediction of things to come, with the circumſtances attending them, which no man could know or foreſee. This evidence is here ſtated at large, and illuſtrated by a remarkable inſtance, ſuited to make deep impreſſion on the attentive mind. Having enlarged on theſe topics, our Prophet applies the doctrine to ſolace the dejected minds of God's upright ſervants, upon whom he was about to confer the moſt ſubſtantial benefits.—In the execution of this plan, the Moſt High God is repreſented calling upon idolaters to attend to the words of his mouth, and to produce their cauſe. The foreknowledge and providence of Jehovah is then demonſtrated, from his having raiſed up an illuſtrious prince, whoſe character is delineated, to perform an arduous enterpriſe, to the great aſtoniſhment of thoſe who were addicted to the ſervice of idols, ver. 1—7.—The afflicted church is next addreſſed with the moſt comfortable aſſurances, by which they are taught to expect all neceſſary aſſiſtance and relief, ſuited to animate them under their diſtreſſes, ver. 8—20.—In the latter part of the chapter, the argument above mentioned is again brought forward and amplified, v. 21—28.—From whence the concluſion is deduced which is ſtated in v. 29th.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLI.

KEEP ſilence before me, O iſlands, and let the people renew *their* ſtrength; let them come near; then let them ſpeak; let us come near together to judgment.

On this part of his diſcourſe our Prophet enters with great ſolemnity; and in the name of Almighty God demands attention from people of different regions, and invites them to ſupport idol-worſhip by the beſt arguments they could produce. He calls upon them with their utmoſt ability to ſtand forth in defence of their ſuperſtition.—*Keep ſilence before me, O iſlands.* Refrain from ſpeaking, and from every thing that might diſturb your thoughts, or interrupt that reſpectful ſtillneſs with which every meſſage from God ought to be heard. Liſten with diligent, patient attention to what I am about to deliver, ye inhabitants, not only of the continent, but of the iſlands of the ſea. Put yourſelves into the moſt proper poſture to receive the truth without prejudice, and to perceive the force of the arguments that are now to be adduced with a view to your conviction. In compliance with this requiſition, do you, my brethren, reply in the words of the centurion to the apoſtle Peter, We are all here preſent before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.—*Let the people renew their ſtrength.* Exert all the vigour of your minds, your powers of reaſon, in canvaſſing the momentous ſubject now to be laid before you, and in examining the evidences of the exiſtence, attributes, and government of Jehovah, which are to be ſubmitted to your conſideration.—*Let them come near,* to manage the controverſy that is preſently to be agitated, and bring forward the ſtrongeſt reaſons which they can produce, in ſupport of idolatrous practices. Let them ſay what they can to vindicate the cauſe they mean to ſupport, that it may be fairly diſcuſſed, and

and advance whatever they imagine may tend to juſtify their conduct.—*Let them come near together to judgment.* The Moſt High over all the earth, tho' infinitely exalted above his creatures, graciouſly condeſcends to reaſon with men, to admit them to examine and reply to what he ſaith, claiming no other pre-eminence than that which ariſes from the force of argument, and the juſtice of his cauſe. Come near, then, like thoſe who warmly engage in debate; open the caſe, ſtate the facts, arrange the proofs you mean to bring forward; and then let the whole matter be determined by the award of unbiaſſed judgment. Let us heedfully attend to what both parties have to ſay on each ſide of the queſtion, with minds open to conviction and deſirous to know the truth.

2 Who raiſed up the righteous *man* from the eaſt, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings, he gave *them* as the duſt to his ſword, *and* as driven ſtubble to his bow.

3 He purſued them, and paſſed ſafely; *even* by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.

The proof here adduced of the ſupreme divinity of the God of Iſrael, is derived from the peculiar agency of divine providence, in raiſing up ſome illuſtrious perſon, the place of whoſe appearance is ſpecified, and who is characterized by his equity, his proſperity, his conqueſts, and other circumſtances. Who beſide the true God can claim the honour of calling into exiſtence, and bringing forth into action, ſuch a great prince as is deſcribed in theſe verſes? This act of ſovereign power, the Lord God challenges as his peculiar prerogative and ſole operation, to which the gods of the nations did not in the leaſt contribute. Could any other than the Almighty God, who doth according to his pleaſure in heaven and on earth, have given ſuch a ſtriking proof of his government of the univerſe.—Interpreters are divided in ſentiment reſpecting

reſpecting the perſon of whom the prophet ſpeaks. As the matter ſeems to me dubious, I ſhall not occupy your time by ſtating the arguments whereby their ſeveral opinions are ſupported, but ſimply ſhew that the words are applicable either to the patriarch Abraham, or to Cyrus king of Perſia, leaving you to adopt that opinion which ſeems beſt to accord with the ſcope of the diſcourſe.

Abraham was an eminently righteous man, for what ſaith the ſcripture, 'He believed God, and it 'was accounted unto him for righteouſneſs *.' Of this righteouſneſs having received the ſign and ſeal, he exhibited convincing evidence by walking uprightly before God, and by commanding his children and houſehold to keep the way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment.—*Who raiſed him from the eaſt*, from Ur, of the Chaldees, which was ſituated to the eaſtward of the land of Canaan, probably in the eaſtern parts of Meſopotamia.—*Called him to his foot*, that he might implicitly obey his commands, and attend him whitherſoever his providence might lead the way.—*Gave the nations before him*, when he with his trained ſervants purſued four kings, and ſmote them; and when his poſterity, in following ages, deſtroyed the nations of Canaan, and acquired dominion over many princes.—*He gave them as the duſt to his ſword*, &c. The ſword and the bow of this victorious warrior, and of his deſcendants, drove away their enemies, and ſcattered them with ſuch eaſe and rapidity, as duſt and dry ſtubble are carried away by a ſtrong wind.—Thoſe who eſcaped from ſlaughter, he vigorouſly purſued, and notwithſtanding the dangers to which he was expoſed, and his ignorance of the country through which he paſſed, he was preſerved in ſafety. The whole hiſtory of this great man and his poſterity, (who I ſuppoſe are here included) from the time he left the land of his nativity, down to the day wherein this diſcourſe was delivered, and to the hour in which I now ſpeak, afford

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* Rom. iv. 3.

a ſtanding proof of the power and providence of the true God, a ſtriking demonſtration of the peculiar care and unchangeable faithfulneſs of Jehovah.—I ſaid alſo,

The words under conſideration, are applicable to Cyrus king of Perſia, celebrated for wiſdom, equity, generoſity, clemency, and magnanimity; the moſt accompliſhed monarch that ever governed any empire. The Roman orator affirms, that during his whole reign, he was never heard to ſpeak one rough or angry word *. What ſelf-government muſt he have poſſeſſed, who amidſt croſſes, diſappointments, unforeſeen accidents, and the intoxicating effects of power, never ſhewed any ſymptom of his mind being ruffled, or uttered any harſh expreſſion.—Who but Almighty God, raiſed him up from the eaſt, from Perſia, which lay to the eaſtward of Canaan, exalted him to preſide over the kingdom of Perſia, and employed him to accompliſh the deliverance of the Jewiſh people from Babylon.—*Called him to his foot*, that he might receive his orders, and execute his pleaſure.—*Gave the nations before him*, &c. the kingdoms of Armenia, Lydia, and Babylon, with many others. In the proclamation he iſſued throughout his empire, he ſaith, 'The Lord God of heaven had 'given him all the kingdoms of the earth †.'—*He gave them as the duſt*, &c. God made them flee before him and his victorious army, as the duſt and ſtubble are driven and ſcattered by the wind.—*He purſued them*, &c. who fled, and made them ſubmit to his authority. Amid all the perils he ſuſtained in traverſing unknown tracts of country, in paſſing the Tigris, the Euphrates, and other great rivers, he was preſerved unhurt to accompliſh the deſigns of providence.—The aſtoniſhing enterpriſes, the wonderful ſucceſs of this illuſtrious prince, whom the Moſt High God employed to fulfil his council, according to the predictions of his prophets, can be aſcribed only to the powerful operation of the God of Iſrael. Though this

* Cicero, lib. 1. ep. 2. ad Q. fratrem. † Ezra i. 2.

this great man did not ariſe in the eaſt for a long time after this appeal was made to the nations, yet memorable predictions were delivered concerning him, which no human ſagacity could have deviſed, which no power leſs than divine could have executed.—Predictions which the omnipotence and veracity of Jehovah were engaged to fulfil, and conſequently the event might be conſidered as perfectly certain, and be mentioned in prophetic language, as if already come to paſs.—This argument alone, properly conſidered, ſerves to evince the ſupreme divinity of Jehovah, and therefore in concluſion of this article, I addreſs you in the words of Moſes to the children of Iſrael, 'Know therefore this day, and conſider it in thine 'heart that the Lord, he is God in heaven above, and 'upon the earth beneath; there is none elſe. Thou 'ſhalt keep therefore his ſtatutes, and his command-'ments which I command thee this day *,' &c.

4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the firſt, and with the laſt, I *am* he.

The Lord God would have the eminent diſplay of his power and providence now mentioned, to be attentively viewed, as his peculiar operation, who worketh all in all. He would have the inhabitants of the earth to conſider, that the revolutions of ſtates and empires does not proceed from what is called fate or chance, but from the all-wiſe Governor of the univerſe, who preſides over all human affairs, and doth according to his pleaſure in heaven and earth. Think then who hath done the wonderful things to which our prophet refers, *calling the generations from the beginning*, into exiſtence, raiſing up men in every age to occupy the ſtations he aſſigns them, and to perform the work he appoints them; determining the time wherein they ſhould make their appearance, and the length of their days; the places and periods wherein they

* Deut. iv. 39, 40.

they were to live, and the bounds of their habitations.—*I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he.* All these things, must be attributed to the self-existent eternal Jehovah, who never had a beginning, and who never shall have an end; who is what he ever was, and who always will be what he now is. He is the first cause, by whom all things were called into being, and the ultimate end in whose glory they shall terminate. The expression explicitly affirms, the everlasting, unchangeable nature of Jehovah, which admits not of any alteration or decay. To this eternal God, and not to the idols of the nations, all events owe their existence; and therefore those who do homage to other gods, ought to turn from these dead idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

5 The isles saw *it*, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

The inhabitants of the islands, and the remote parts of the earth, were spectators of the surprising phœnomenon to which Isaiah refers; they beheld it with astonishment and consternation. Agitated by fear and terror, lest they also should be vanquished, lest superstition and idolatry should be destroyed, and the worship of the true God established; they excited one another to fabricate idols, from whom they might request assistance and deliverance. And those who dwelt in places of the world farthest distant from the scene of action, were likewise overwhelmed with fear and dismay; they marvelled, (as it is written in the 48th Psalm) 'they were troubled; fear took hold of 'them, and pain, as of a woman in travail.'—*They drew near*, that they might consult one with another what measures were proper to be adopted on this emergency; when to appease their idols, and to obtain their aid, they determined to act with unanimity and vigour, in the manner related in the next verse that follows.

6 They helped every one his neighbour; and *every one* ſaid to his brother, Be of good courage.

The above mentioned admirable diſplays of divine wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, far from making proper impreſſions on the minds of the people addicted to idolatry, and inducing them to unite in the praiſes of Jehovah, for his wonderful works to the children of men, produced very different effects. They aſſociated together, that they might contribute to ſupport and extend idolatrous practices. Prompted by a ſcrupulous regard to the blind idols which they ſerved, every one aſſiſted another in promoting the deteſtible ſuperſtition to which they had long been inured.—*And every one ſaid*, &c. The general opinion was, that courage, activity, and expedition on the part of thoſe employed in forming graven images, was the moſt proper plan of operation which they could execute at preſent. Accordingly, they proceeded to ſtimulate each other to the practice of profanity and wickedneſs, if poſſible to thwart the benevolent deſigns of Providence.

7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldſmith, *and* he that ſmootheth *with* the hammer, him that ſmote the anvil, ſaying, It *is* ready for the ſodering; and he faſtened it with nails, *that* it ſhould not be moved.

Tradeſmen engaged in fabricating idols, buſy in their different employments, are here repreſented exciting one another to diſpatch in their ſeveral departments, that images of every ſort might be completed without delay. Their activity and zeal is ſimply deſcribed, in terms which do not require any explanation. Permit me, however to ſay, that the aſſiduous efforts of theſe people to maintain and promote abominable idolatry, ought to inſtigate

the ſervants of the only true God to unabating vigorous exertions in advancing his honour and glory.

8 But thou, Iſrael, *art* my ſervant, Jacob whom I have choſen, the ſeed of Abraham my friend.

Our Prophet now proceeds to adminiſter conſolation to the afflicted church of God, by addreſſing to them the moſt reviving aſſurances of ſupport and relief. The appellations which are here given them firſt demand our attention.—Iſrael and Jacob, are the reſpectful deſignations given to the poſterity of the renowned patriarch who was called by theſe names. They are ſeldom denominated by the name of Iſaac; not becauſe he was leſs worthy of regard than his ſon, but as he was the progenitor of the Idumeans, as well as of the people whom God appropriated to himſelf, his name could not have ſo properly diſcriminated them from every other nation. In the words before us, are compriſed not only the deſcendants from Jacob, according to the fleſh, but likewiſe all his ſpiritual poſterity. Though the Jews were primarily intended, yet this part of the diſcourſe muſt be transferred, and applied to the church at large, profeſſing faith in God and his ſalvation. To them, eſpecially in circumſtances of diſtreſs, the deſignation is peculiarly ſuitable; for the patriarch himſelf, experienced many afflictions, from all which he was delivered through the tender mercy and care of God. When in trouble and perplexity, when viſited with trials of his faith and patience, he wreſtled with God in prayer, he had power, and prevailed; the Lord heard him in the day of his diſtreſs, and was with him in the way that he went. On theſe, and other accounts, did Iſrael afford an eminent type of the church of God contending with various afflictions, who become more than conquerors through him that loved them.—Iſrael is here deſigned the ſervant of God. This honourable character belongs to him in common

common with the whole church, who having renounced the other lords who had dominion over them, yield unlimited ſubjection to the Lord their God, ſolicitous to know and obey his will. Senſible of his unalienable right to them, and their beſt ſervices, each of them are ready to adopt the words of a celebrated king of Iſrael, 'Lord, I am thy ſervant, truly I am thy ſervant *.' Employed in his ſervice, which is honourable and glorious, they have recourſe to him for all neceſſary proviſion, for protection from evil, for ſupport under affliction, and ſtrength for the performance of duty.—*Whom I have choſen*, not on account of any ſuperior excellence that they poſſeſſed above other people; of this the literal Iſrael were often admoniſhed by Moſes, and afterward by Ezra and Nehemiah, but becauſe the Lord loved them. In his ſovereign good pleaſure, he ſelected them from among all the nations that are on the face of the earth, to be a peculiar treaſure unto himſelf. Theſe diſtinguiſhing characters are no leſs appropriate to the ſpiritual Iſrael, who are indeed the ſervants of the living God, whom he hath choſen not according to their works, but according to his own purpoſe and grace, that he may be glorified in them, and that they may glorify him in all things through Jeſus Chriſt.

The ſeed of Abraham my friend. The church, under the Old Teſtament, were literally the children of this renowned patriarch, who in this and two other paſſages of ſcripture, is honoured with the high character of the friend of God †. Volumes written in praiſe of this great man, could not ſay more than what is contained in theſe few words. To underſtand their import, recollect the diſpenſations of providence toward him, how it pleaſed God to treat him; and then mark Abraham's character, and obſerve his conduct toward God. On the part of Jehovah, we behold the moſt amiable condeſcenſion, the moſt endearing unſhaken affection expreſſed in effectual vocation, in

* Pſal. cxvi. 16. † 2 Chron. xx. 7. James ii. 23.

in the gift of righteouſneſs, in the care of Providence, in many gracious promiſes, in familiar intercourſe, in the communication of his purpoſes, in the ſeals and bleſſings of his covenant, and the pleaſing hope of his eternal ſalvation. On the part of Abraham, we ſee ſtrong faith in God, fervent love, profound reverence, unlimited confidence, prompt obedience to the moſt trying commands, patient ſubmiſſion to the divine will, and inviolable attachment to the honour and worſhip of the true God, whoſe favour he enjoyed. In this manner was expreſſed the ſacred friendſhip that ſubſiſted betwixt God and Abraham. How honourable to be called the children of this beloved familiar friend of the moſt high God, this mighty prince, this eminent prophet, this father of the faithful, this example of all them that believe. Of this privilege, the Jews who doubtleſs were ſenſible that the upright ſervants of God, are often the means of conveying to their poſterity the moſt important benefits, boaſted to our Saviour when they exultingly ſaid, 'We have Abraham to our father *.' It ſeems to have been an eſtabliſhed maxim, that thoſe who form themſelves on any perſon of diſtinguiſhed excellence, and live as he did, ſhould be called his children. On this acknowleged principle, Abraham is the father of all them that believe, who walk in his ſteps, and do his works as truly as of his natural poſterity. So then, they that are of faith, are bleſſed with faithful Abraham, they are the ſpiritual poſterity of the friend of God, who are addreſſed in the words I have been conſidering.—If you, brethren, claim this honour, it is indiſpenſibly requiſite that you ſtudiouſly endeavour to maintain intimate communion with God, that you take his counſel in every emergency, and be ſolicitous in all things to pleaſe him, and to advance his glory.

9 *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men

* John viii. 39.

men thereof, and ſaid unto thee, Thou *art* my ſervant; I have choſen thee, and not caſt thee away.

Several ſubſtantial proofs of God's gracious regard for Abraham are here ſpecified.—*I have taken thee from the ends of the earth.* The Hebrew word here uſed to denote this generous act, ſignifies the exertion of a mighty valiant man, who takes hold of a weak and feeble perſon, and kindly ſnatches him from imminent danger. In rich mercy, Almighty God was pleaſed to lay hold on Abraham, and bring him forth from his native country, where he might have periſhed had he not been reſcued from ruin. In ſcripture ſtile, lands that lay at a great diſtance from Canaan, are ſpoken of as the ends of the earth. A remarkable inſtance occurs in Jeremiah xxxi. 8. where the reſtoration of the Jews from Aſſyria to Judea is foretold in theſe words, 'Behold I will bring 'them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth.' And as Ur of the Chaldees was a country very remote from the land of Paleſtine, it bears this deſignation in the verſe before us.—*And called thee from the chief men thereof*, with whom thou waſt intimately connected, and didſt frequently aſſociate.—*And ſaid unto thee, Thou art my ſervant.* Ever ſince thy vocation, this is the language which I have uſed in ſpeaking to thee and thy poſterity, by my prophets in every age, *Thou art my ſervant*, whom I have admitted into my preſence, and employed in executing my pleaſure, and on whom I will confer the moſt important benefits.—*I have choſen thee*, even in a forlorn and hopeleſs ſtate, to be the object of my love, and the inſtrument of advancing my glory.—*And not caſt thee away*, out of my favour, notwithſtanding the failings and imperfections which thou haſt occaſionally diſcovered.—Hence you ſee, that God doth not reject or caſt off his people whom he foreknew and called. His love is unchangeable, his gifts and calling are without repentance.

tance. The bleſſings enjoyed by his people, are not conferred on account of their merits, but proceed from the purpoſe and grace of God. Theſe important truths are every where inculcated by the ſacred writers, and particularly by Iſaiah, in the words I have now been illuſtrating.

10 Fear thou not, for I *am* with thee; be not diſmayed, for I *am* thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs.

To the preceding condeſcending addreſs, is ſubjoined an animating exhortation inforced by the moſt perſuaſive arguments ſuited to excite faith and confidence in God. To claim the greater attention, the admonition is repeated—*Fear thou not; be not diſmayed.* The fear or diſmay which the people of God are directed to lay aſide, ariſes from the dread of evil, real or ſuppoſed, from ſuſpicion and diſtruſt of the kind providence and faithful promiſes of God. It enfeebles and diſturbs the mind, it fills the heart with conſternation, it incapacitates for duty, it produces anxiety and uneaſineſs, it prevents the enjoyment of tranquillity and comfort, whilſt it diſpoſes to look to improper means for obtaining relief. The ſervants of God are here required to diſmiſs this diſtreſſing paſſion. Fear thou not the enemies wherewith you have to contend, they that be with you be more than they that be with them. Greater is he that is in you, than all they that are, or can be againſt you; and therefore you may boldly ſay, 'If God be for 'us, who can be againſt us,'—'tho' an hoſt ſhould 'encamp againſt me, in this will I be confident, my 'heart ſhall not fear.'—Be not diſmayed by the difficulties you may have to encounter. As they ſtart up into view in thick ſucceſſion, deſpondency may be apt to exclaim, Who is ſufficient for theſe things? But be of good courage; through God you ſhall do valiantly,

valiantly, and vanquiſh all that oppoſition which occaſionally ſeems ſo formidable. In the words of the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel and his companions, 'Be ſtrong, ſaith the Lord, and work—My Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not *.'—Fear not any of thoſe things you may ſuffer. Though you ſhould be called to ſuſtain perſecution, oppoſition, and trouble as an evil-doer, and be treated as an object of contempt, on account of ſteady attachment to the ſervice of God, be not diſmayed and terrified. 'If 'you be reproached for the name of Chriſt, happy are 'you; for the Spirit of glory and of God reſteth upon 'you; on their part he is evil ſpoken of, on your part 'he is glorified.' If you ſuffer for righteouſneſs' ſake, the benediction of the Son of God ſhall be your portion; and God will not allow you to be tempted or tried above that you are able to bear, but with the temptation will make a way to eſcape, that you may be able to bear it.—Thou ſervant of the living God, fear not, neither be diſmayed. Shrink not at the approach of danger; be not terrified by the aſſaults of thine enemies, however formidable they may appear. That kind and gracious maſter whom thou ſerveſt, forbids you to allow your heart to be afraid or troubled.

For I am with thee. Diverſe powerful motives are ſuggeſted to enforce compliance with the above direction.—I the everlaſting God the Lord, for whom all things are poſſible, whoſe mercy endureth ever, and whoſe faithfulneſs never faileth; I, even I, will protect thee by my providence, I will guide thee by my counſel, I will aſſiſt and ſupport thee by my grace. Such is the comprehenſive import of theſe few words, that they include preſervation from danger, or deliverance out of it, endearing expreſſions of peculiar favour, with all neceſſary conſolation under the preſſure of affliction. The firm belief of this reviving promiſe, inſpired the king of Iſrael with undaunted fortitude amidſt the enemies with whom he was

* Chap. ii. 4, 5.

was encompaſſed; ſo that he could ſay with triumph, 'The Lord is on my ſide, I will not fear *.' This gracious aſſurance, which was firſt given to encourage the patriarch Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, was afterward renewed to ſeveral eminent men of God under the Old Teſtament, and is here recorded for the encouragement of the faithful in all ages.—*I am thy God.* Language cannot expreſs, nor heart conceive the full import of theſe words. Saith God, I who am infinitely greater and more excellent than all the gods of the nations, I who am all-ſufficient, poſſeſſing eternal glory and inexhauſtible treaſures, I am thy God who entered into covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine, my peculiar property, the object of my diſtinguiſhing love, and the honoured inſtrument of advancing my glory. Thou ſaidſt unto me, Thou art my Lord, my ſure portion, which I have choſen, my gracious Father, whom I love and obey. In this manner having become thy God, my perfections ſhall be employed to advance thy beſt intereſts; my promiſes ſhall be fulfilled, whereby thou art aſſured of grace and glory, and every good thing. Surely theſe conſiderations ought to baniſh from thy mind every diſquieting fear.

I will ſtrengthen thee. I will confirm your faith, and hope, and confidence; ſo that you ſhall ſtand faſt, quit you like men, and be ſtrong. Though according to divine teſtimony, and the acknowledgments of the moſt eminent ſaints, you find yourſelf inſufficient to perform any good thing, I will impart to you new vigour, and furniſh you for every good work. You cannot doubt of my ability, to whom you have often heard that power appertains, and to whom belongs the ſtrength of the hills. You cannot call in queſtion my inclination and readineſs to aſſiſt, who hath voluntarily pledged my veracity, that in every time of need you ſhall have renewed communications of this neceſſary bleſſing. In times paſt I have ſupported you by power from on high, and in every future period you ſhall

* Pſal. cxviii. 6.

ſhall experience, that as your day is ſo is your ſtrength. By granting you clear perceptions of the evidence and import of divine truth, I will eſtabliſh your faith; and by bringing you to the firm perſuaſion of my favour and veracity, I will confirm your hope and truſt unto the end.—*Yea, I will help thee.* One expreſſion is added to another, to give the fulleſt aſſurance of the extenſive aid and ſupport which every true Iſraelite may expect. God, my brethren, is the helper of the helpleſs; though friends may fail and forſake him, the Lord will afford him all neceſſary aſſiſtance, according to his promiſe. By ſeaſonable interpoſitions of his providence, he will ſuccour you in the time of trouble, or deliver you from your diſtreſs; he will defend you from evil, and ſo diſpoſe of all your concerns, that you may enjoy ſafety, and attain to victory and glory. To excite you to diligent improvement of the means he hath inſtituted, he will ſometimes render them effectual for giving you relief; to demonſtrate that he is an all-ſufficient help, he will ſometimes convey it to you without the intervention of means; and to ſhew that every inſtrument derives its efficacy from him, he will ſometimes give you help by the moſt inconſiderable means. In which ever way he verifies his promiſe to you, he will enable you to triumph in the words of that beautiful hymn wherein the church is taught to give God the glory of their preſervation, 'Our 'help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven 'and earth *.'

The upright ſervant of God, being thus aſſured of the divine preſence and ſupport, may now ſubmit without timidity or diſmay to the moſt grievous afflictions. But to remove every poſſible ground of anxiety that might ariſe from the long continuance of diſtreſs, God is pleaſed explicitly to declare—*Yea, I will uphold thee.* I will ſo powerfully ſuſtain thee, that thou ſhalt be kept from ſinking under the accumulated weight of calamities. I will furniſh thee

* Pſal. cxxiv. 8.

with freſh vigour and courage; when ready to ſuccumb, I will be thy ſtay, and will employ ſuitable means and inſtruments to preſerve thee from falling into deſpondency, under the preſſure of diſtreſs. I the Lord, who love the righteous, who raiſeth up thoſe that are bowed down, will ſtretch out my omnipotent arm to uphold thee, when oppreſſed with ſin and ſorrow, and in mercy will again ſet thee upright. This I will do—*With the right hand of my righteouſneſs*, by the exertion of my mighty power, that can do all things, and which is always conducted in a manner perfectly conſiſtent with conſummate equity, with the honour of my government, and the aſſurances contained in my word of truth.—Theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes God remarkably fulfilled to his ſervants, deſtitute of all human aſſiſtance, in the time of the Maccabees, when he wonderfully ſuſtained them under the heavy calamities they ſuffered, and inſpired them with heroic courage to oppoſe and vanquiſh their enemies. Nor were they leſs conſpicuouſly accompliſhed to the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt in the early ages of the Chriſtian church, when conflicting with the virulent oppoſition of their powerful adverſaries. The rich diſplays which they exhibit of the abundant grace of the Lord God, ought to be conſidered by ſinners of mankind, as moſt perſuaſive arguments to excite them to the exerciſe of thoſe amiable diſpoſitions, which they are intended to cheriſh. And by the upright among men, they ought to be improved as ſtrong encouragements, to dependance on God and obedience to his will, in the pleaſing hope of enjoying the important benefits they contain.

11 Behold, all they that were incenſed againſt thee ſhall be aſhamed and confounded: they ſhall be as nothing; and they that ſtrive with thee ſhall periſh.

Another ground of conſolation pointed out to the ſervants

ſervants of God, is derived from the certain victory they ſhall obtain over their enemies, and the aſſurance of their total deſtruction.—They are repreſented as being greatly enraged at Iſrael, on account of the ſtrong oppoſition they had ſhewn to their wicked practices, and the firm attachment they diſcovered to the worſhip and ſervice of the living God. For theſe and other reaſons, bad men are greatly exaſperated and inflamed with rage againſt the people of God, whom they haraſs and perſecute. Perſons of this character ſhall be recompenſed in due time. —*They ſhall be aſhamed and confounded.* Their puniſhment ſhall be ſuitable and proportioned to their crimes. They aimed to put to ſhame, to confound, to contemn, and to deſtroy the choſen ſervants of Jehovah at whom they were exceedingly irritated. As the juſt retribution of this odious conduct, Iſrael are invited to contemplate them receiving the juſt reward of their deeds. They ſhall be covered with ſhame and confuſion on account of their egregious folly; they ſhall be perplexed and troubled at the remembrance of their wickedneſs, and with the proſpect of inevitable ruin.—*They ſhall be as nothing.* They ſhall become baſe and contemptible, they ſhall be deprived entirely of power and influence, and be brought to nought—*They that ſtrive with thee ſhall periſh.* They who contend with thee and endeavour by ſtrife and violence, to reſiſt the force of truth and innocence, to injure by various ways thy beſt intereſts, and to deſtroy thy peace and comfort; ſhall periſh from off the earth, and fall into irremediable deſtruction.—Malignant rage, and virulent oppoſition, directed againſt the people of God, is a daring affront offered to the Almighty; it is a flagitious attempt to counteract the deſigns of his providence and grace, to deſtroy his image and temple from among men; and therefore we cannot be ſurpriſed when informed, that they who act in this manner ſhall be conſigned to perdition.

12 Thou

12 Thou ſhalt ſeek them, and ſhalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war againſt thee ſhall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

The ſubject introduced in the preceding verſe, is here continued and amplified.—The perſons who were to be ſought for in vain, are the furious perſecutors of the ſervants of God, who with great rancour and rage, contended with them on account of the principles and practices to which they were inviolably attached, and who were therefore conſigned to deſtruction. Though like a mighty river overflowing its banks, that runs with the utmoſt impetuoſity, they threatened ruin to all that ſtood in their way, yet being themſelves unexpectedly overthrown, they were to be ſought for in vain. According to the prediction of the royal prophet, 'The wicked ſhall periſh, and 'the enemies of the Lord ſhall be as the fat of lambs; 'they ſhall conſume, into ſmoke ſhall they conſume 'away *.' 'They paſſed away, and, lo, they are not; 'yea, I ſought them, but they could not be found †.' —The latter part of this verſe contains the ſame ſentiment expreſſed in the former verſe, and ſtrongly ſuggeſts this uſeful remark, that the malicious actions done by falſe brethren to the people of God, expoſe the perpetrators to deſolating judgments. Many inſtances of this ſort are recorded in ſcripture, of which I only mention one at preſent. The Edomites, for their unfriendly conduct toward the poſterity of Jacob incurred this awful denunciation of divine vengeance: 'For thy violence againſt thy brother Ja'cob, ſhame ſhall cover thee; and thou ſhalt be cut 'off for ever ‡.'—Thus it came to paſs in the times of the Maccabees, in the early ages of the Chriſtian church, and in ſubſequent periods, as might be eaſily evinced were it neceſſary.

13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right

* Pſal. xxxvii. 20. † Ver. 36. ‡ Obadiah, ver. 10.

right hand, ſaying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.

Our Prophet repeats the reviving truth he had advanced in ver. 10. as a ground of conſolation to the dejected ſervants of God reduced to the utmoſt extremity of diſtreſs. If it be aſked, how can they expect to behold their enemies diſperſed and brought to nothing; a ſatisfying anſwer is given in the words before us; which afford a freſh diſplay of the divine condeſcenſion, and the gracious regard that God never fails to diſcover for his people in circumſtances of affliction. Their diſmaying fears often return, and therefore to diſpel them, he is pleaſed once and again to ſuggeſt the moſt animating aſſurances, that they may make the deeper impreſſion on their minds. Though theſe repetitions may ſeem tedious or unneceſſary to thoſe who perceive not their beauty and importance, they ſerve to confirm the comfortable truths they contain, and to excite firm confidence in the promiſes of Jehovah. They awaken attention, and render the impreſſion of what is reiterated deeper and more durable. With theſe views, Iſaiah again inculcates what he had already aſſerted, upon the principle adopted by the apoſtle of the Gentiles, 'To write the ſame things to you, to me is not grie-'vous, but for you it is ſafe *.'—Frequently revolve in your thoughts, my brethren, theſe conſolatory words, until you become well acquainted with their import; earneſtly pray that they may be verified unto you, until you experience their joyful accompliſhment.

14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Iſrael: I will help thee, ſaith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Iſrael.

This animating exhortation is again addreſſed to Jacob and Iſrael, with whoſe names two diminutive appellations

* Phil. iii. 1.

appellations are united. With the former is joined the deſignation of a worm; and with the latter, that of men or mortals, as the Hebrew word ſignifies. Though the firſt of theſe epithets is very humiliating, yet it is certainly applicable to every individual in the church of God. Thoſe who through divine mercy are elevated to the enjoyment of the glorious privileges ſpecified in the preceding verſes, and who feel the remains of pride and other corrupt paſſions, need to be reminded of their inſignificance, and conſequent unworthineſs of ſuch ineſtimable benefits. The tender compaſſion which God ſhews to his ſervants, and the ſubſtantial bleſſings whereby they are enriched, are conferred, not on account of their intrinſic excellence or dignity, but for his own name's ſake.—*Fear not*, ſaith God, thou weak, deſpicable, defenceleſs creature, who art liable to be trampled upon by wicked men of the earth, and cruſhed under the feet of violence; who art incapable of reſiſting the force that would oppreſs and deſtroy thee—Thou who art in a low neglected condition, ſilent, overlooked, and contemned by the mighty, the rich, and the noble, as the filth of the world, and the offſcouring of all things, thou who ſaith, behold, I am vile; I abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes—Thou who in theſe and other reſpects, art conformed to my righteous ſervant, who in his humiliation, according to prophecy, notwithſtanding his tranſcendent excellence, ſhall compare himſelf to the loweſt reptile which his own hand hath formed *.—*Ye mortals of Iſrael*, who are ſprung of the duſt, frail, uncertain, dying creatures, who are liable to innumerable diſeaſes and accidents, whereby you may be cut off from the land of the living. From the day of your nativity and firſt appearance upon earth, you are continually obnoxious to diſſolution and death, and every moment approaching nearer to mortality. Ye few men of Iſrael, as the original word is rendered on the margin, whoſe number is now comparatively ſmall to what

* See Pſalm xxii. 7.

what it once was, before ye were cut ſhort in righteouſneſs. Ye little flock, which God hath ſelected for his peculiar treaſure, who are apt to be incumbered by fears and cares, both as to your temporal and ſpiritual concerns, as to your preſent and future ſtate—To you I repeat the admonition I have once and again delivered, Fear not.

I will help thee, ſaith the Lord, &c. To engage you to comply with this ſalutary direction, I once more ſuggeſt that powerful motive which ought to baniſh from your minds every timorous apprehenſion. I the Lord will not only afford thee, the neceſſary aid communicated to mankind in general, but to thee I will ſuperadd the ſpecial aſſiſtance of my Spirit and grace; I will reſcue thee from the hands of thy enemies; I will protect thee from evil, and give thee the inclination, ability, and opportunity of doing that which is well pleaſing in my ſight. Of this ſeaſonable help, you have the moſt explicit aſſurance given you by the Lord, the eternal, omnipotent, faithful Jehovah, who can impart with infinite eaſe at all times, and in all places, the relief that you need, and which he hath promiſed.—*And thy Redeemer*, who redeemed thy father Jacob from all evil, who delivered his poſterity from Egyptian bondage, and who ſaves his ſpiritual Iſrael from all their iniquities, and from the hands of all their enemies.—*The Holy One of Iſrael*, from whom all their ſanctity proceeds, and who in their ſervices and aſſemblies is celebrated and ſanctified by them. Theſe amiable characters here claimed by Jehovah give ſatisfying ſecurity to his peculiar people, that he will be their all-ſufficient help; and therefore they ought not to indulge ſinful ſlaviſh fears, that may prove highly prejudicial to themſelves, and diſhonourable to God. They ought rather to take courage, and ſay with the church of old, 'God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent 'help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, &c.*'

15 Behold

* Pſal. xlvi. 1, 2.

15 Behold I will make thee a new ſharp threſhing inſtrument having teeth; thou ſhalt threſh the mountains, and beat *them* ſmall, and ſhalt make the hills as chaff.

The Lord, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Iſrael, ſolemnly declares that he was about to accompliſh, by means of his people, great things, far beyond their expectation. Though afflicted and deſpiſed, they were not only to repel the attacks of their enemies, aſſiſted by the powers of this world, but through the aid of the Almighty they were to ſubdue many great and powerful princes, and to bring them into ſubjection to their Lord and Redeemer.—*Behold, I will make thee a new ſharp threſhing inſtrument*, &c. This figurative expreſſion ſeems to have been taken from the threſhing inſtruments anciently uſed among eaſtern nations, which at preſent I ſhall not attempt to deſcribe, having mentioned the different kinds of theſe machines, when diſcourſing from chap. xxviii. 27. Nor will I ſtay to embelliſh this metaphor, or to juſtify the application of it, which is plainly intended to give a ſtriking repreſentation of the ſlaughter and diſperſion of the wicked. The force and ſuitableneſs of this image to illuſtrate the ſubject, affords ſufficient reaſon for its adoption.—*Having teeth* well fitted to execute the important purpoſe which thou ſhalt be the means of accompliſhing.—*Thou ſhalt threſh the mountains*. Theſe words muſt be underſtood, not in the literal, but in the metaphorical ſenſe. The ſtate of mankind reſembles the uneven ſurface of the earth, ſome parts of which are low, and others high and mountainous. In like manner, ſome people are in a low ſituation, ſome ſtand on a level with the great bulk, ſome, like mountains, are elevated high above others. Theſe laſt mentioned are the perſons here intended. In this view, the prediction imports, that Iſrael, the peculiar people of God, were to be employed by divine Providence in beating down and breaking to pieces their powerful enemies among whom

whom were many mighty princes and great kingdoms, whoſe pomp and grandeur ſhould be trampled upon and deſtroyed.—*And beat them ſmall.* So complete was to be the conqueſt they ſhould obtain over their formidable adverſaries, that they were to be reduced to the moſt abject ſubmiſſion, and deprived of their former dignity and importance.—*And ſhalt make the hills as chaff*, which being light and inconſiderable, is driven away and diſperſed by the wind. Thoſe powerful kings and princes, thoſe mighty empires and ſtates that ſupported ſuperſtition and idolatry, and obſtructed the progreſs of the ſervants of God, employed in propagating his kingdom, were according to this prophecy, to be deſtroyed. We may not, however, ſuppoſe that the kingdom of our Lord and his Chriſt, which is not of this world, is inimical to the governments eſtabliſhed on this earth, for promoting the order and happineſs of ſociety; to the beſt intereſts of which it yields the ſtrongeſt ſupport. Should they maliciouſly oppoſe the advancement of the honour, the authority, and deſigns of the Governor among the nations, they have reaſon to expect, that they ſhall be broken in pieces.—This prediction, conſidered in relation to individuals, whoſe minds are puffed up with high thoughts, and lofty imaginations, which exalt themſelves againſt the knowledge of God, may denote; that the word of truth delivered by his ſervants, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, ſhall prove inſtrumental for diveſting them of the errors they had embraced, for ſubduing the pride of their hearts, and bringing them with humble gratitude, to ſubmit to the righteouſneſs and authority of the Son of God. Viewed in reference to ſociety, it may import, that by means of the word of God adminiſtered by his ſervants, attended with divine energy, and armed with awful threatenings, the powers adverſe to the kingdom of God ſhall be demoliſhed.

16 Thou ſhalt fan them, and the wind ſhall

carry them away, and the whirlwind ſhall ſcatter them: and thou ſhalt rejoice in the LORD, and ſhalt glory in the holy One of Iſrael.

In alluſion to the inſtruments uſed in the barn, and the employment of the threſhing floor, our Prophet adds force and beauty to the important ſubject whereof he treats.—*Thou ſhalt fan them.* The fan is an inſtrument uſed for the winnowing of corn, in order to ſeparate the chaff and the refuſe from the good grain, of which there ſeems to have been two kinds among the Jews; one that ſerved to turn up the wheat to the wind, and the other to blow away the ſtraw and the chaff. When therefore God declares that his people ſhall fan the nations, he foretels, that they ſhall be the mean of ſeparating the good from the bad, the righteous from the wicked; and that through their inſtrumentality, the genuine character and temper of men ſhall be diſcovered. Thoſe who eſpouſe their intereſts, ſhall be eaſily diſcriminated from them that oppoſe and injure them. If they be ſeparated from the ungodly and profane, with whom they formerly aſſociated, and appear pure and uncorrupt, they ſhall be eſtimated on account of their worth and excellence; but, if after being put to the trial, they ſeem worthleſs and wicked, they ſhall be diſperſed and abandoned to deſtruction. —*The wind ſhall carry them away;* affliction and calamity ſhall take them away from the enjoyment of the riches, the honours, and pleaſures which they poſſeſſed and highly valued.—*And the whirlwind ſhall ſcatter them.* Unexpected direful judgments ſhall hurl them with violence from their place, and deprive them entirely of the influence they had attained.

And thou ſhalt rejoce in the Lord, &c. Beholding the wonderful increaſe of the kingdom of God, and the diſperſion of its powerful enemies, thou ſhalt be glad in the rich diſplays of the perfections of Jehovah,

exerted

exerted in thy favour, in the ſeaſonable interpoſitions of his providence, in the intimate relations wherein he ſtands connected with thee, in the bleſſings of his goodneſs thou haſt received, and in the glorious proſpects he hath opened to thy view. Your heart ſhall rejoice in the Lord, and you ſhall joy in the God of your ſalvation, ſo that you ſhall be filled with comfort, and be exceeding joyful in all your tribulations.—*And ſhalt glory in the holy One of Iſrael.* Thou ſhalt exult and triumph in God, who is ſupremely excellent and holy, and who haſt done great things, whereof thou haſt cauſe to be glad. Cheriſhing the moſt exalted ſentiments of his tranſcendent majeſty and adorable grace, of his incomparable grandeur, and amiable condeſcenſion, they ſhall ſo occupy thy heart and ingroſs thy affections, that thou ſhalt make thy boaſt of God all the day long, and praiſe his name for ever and ever. And on every proper occaſion, thou ſhalt chearfully expreſs unſhaken confidence and joy in the mercy, power, and faithfulneſs of him who ſanctifies his church, and is ſanctified by them.

17 *When* the poor and needy ſeek water, and *there is* none, *and* their tongue faileth for thirſt, I the LORD will hear them, *I* the God of Iſrael will not forſake them.

Another ſource of conſolation is here opened to the church, when in a deſtitute afflicted condition. The people of God are deſcribed in reference to the neceſſitous circumſtances in which many of them are placed in this preſent world. The Lord and Saviour of the world appeared not on earth in the pomp and ſplendor of a prince, but in the humble form of a ſervant, and was known by the name of a carpenter. The firſt miniſters of his kingdom were ſelected from among poor fiſhermen, by whom the goſpel was preached to the poor, whom God hath choſen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, he hath promiſed

miſed to them that love him*. Though ſome mighty and noble have been called to glory and virtue, yet the bulk of the ſervants of God, are not only in indigent external circumſtances, but they are all poor in ſpirit, and lowly in their minds; deeply ſenſible that they can never diſcharge that immenſe load of debt which they owe to God, that they have nothing to give him worthy of his acceptance, that unable to relieve themſelves, they continually depend on the Giver of all good for every thing that they need. With reſpect to their ſpiritual ſtate, they feel their neceſſities, they acknowledge themſelves deſtitute of the true riches; and ſolicitous to have their wants ſupplied, they place themſelves at wiſdom's gates, and importunately knock at the door of mercy.—When people of this deſcription,

Seek water, and there is none, &c. When diſtreſſed with a painful ſenſe of the want of neceſſary refreſhments, eſſential to their ſubſiſtence and comfort, which in ſome ſituations can hardly be obtained. —In this uneaſy forlorn condition, when they intenſely deſire, and earneſtly ſeek for relief from him who fulfils the juſt deſires of them that fear him, they are here aſſured they ſhall not aſk in vain. Though like Samſon at Ramoth-Lehi, they are ready to periſh with thirſt, the Lord merciful and gracious, will grant them ſeaſonable ſupplies of their neceſſities.—Deficiency of temporal good things, ought to remind us, my brethren, of our ſpiritual wants, as it did the king of Iſrael, who, when diſtreſſed for water, became ſtill more ſenſible of his need of God's preſence and bleſſing. This is indeed one deſign for which God reduces his ſervants to ſtraits; he deprives them of outward comforts, to make them ſenſible of their need of ſpiritual bleſſings, which are moſt excellent and durable. We are ſenſible of our temporal neceſſities, we feel uneaſy under them, we are anxious to have them relieved, and diligently uſe every proper mean to obtain what is

* James ii. 5.

is eſſential to our comfort. When therefore we feel the want of what is requiſite to the ſupport of nature, let us recollect our greater need of ſupplies of grace, and let us requeſt them from God, with more intenſe deſires than ever we felt when parched with thirſt, for the water that flows from the pureſt fountain.—A circumſtance is here mentioned, which renders the condition of the poor truly deplorable, and which excites the divine compaſſion expreſſed in the latter part of the verſe, *viz. There is none.* Notwithſtanding there is commonly abundance of water in the fountains, the ſtreams, and the rivers, the people of God, in particular places, on ſome occaſions, may be viſited with drought, and their ſituation be like that of the nobles of Judah, who ſent their little ones to the waters; they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their veſſels empty *. This painful calamity, exhibits an affecting repreſentation of a more dreadful judgment; a famine not of bread and water, but of the word of God, the ordinances of divine inſtitution, the waters of the ſanctuary, and the influences of the Holy Spirit; from the fatal effects of which the Lord promiſes to deliver his people.

I the Lord will hear, &c. I whoſe tender mercies fail not, who am the hearer of prayer, and a preſent help in time of need, I will graciouſly regard their mournful complaints, and earneſt ſupplications. This diſtinguiſhing favour, which in many inſtances, God hath conferred upon his ſervants, he aſſures them ſhall not be withheld in future periods, and that in the greateſt ſtraits, he will relieve both their temporal and ſpiritual neceſſities.—I the God of Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things, and who hath wrought miracles of mercy for their ſalvation, who am intimately connected with them, and hath at all times the moſt tender ſolicitude for their beſt intereſts.—*I will not forſake them.* Though for wiſe and ſalutary purpoſes I may permit them to fall into trouble

* Jer. xiv. 2, 3.

trouble and ſtraits, in all theſe I will be with them, to ſupport, to revive, and to deliver in the time of extremity. Far from caſting them off, I will not even leave them for a time to ſhift for themſelves; but will retain them continually under the care of my providence. Let Iſrael then rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, whoſe glory and good-will ſhines with ſuch amiable luſtre, in the precious promiſes that he hath given them for their encouragement.

18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midſt of the valleys: I will make the wilderneſs a pool of water, and the dry land ſprings of water.

To adminiſter more abundant conſolation to his upright ſervants, God aſſures them that he will effect the moſt ſurpriſing revolutions to afford them the plentiful ſupply of their wants.—High places, extenſive valleys, the wilderneſs, and the dry land, commonly feel moſt the deplorable effects of the want of water in time of drought. To diſplay the omnipotence of Jehovah, and his tender regard to the neceſſities and prayers of his people in diſtreſs, he mercifully declares, that in every place, however deſtitute of the means of giving them relief, he himſelf will grant them ample ſupplies of what they moſt need, and render their ſituation the reverſe of what it had been in times paſt. He will rather interpoſe, and accompliſh the moſt improbable events, than ſuffer his ſervants to remain deſtitute of neceſſary ſupport and refreſhment. Having ſtated what ſeems to be the general import of the promiſes now before us, in their literal meaning, let us conſider their ſpiritual and more recondite ſenſe. In this view, theſe predictions give explicit aſſurance, that the word and ordinances of God, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, were to have free courſe, and to flow with remarkable ſtrength and fulneſs among

thoſe

thoſe exalted to diſtinguiſhed eminence, and poſſeſſed of lofty ſentiments reſpecting their ſpiritual ſtate—That among thoſe celebrated for humility, beauty, and fruitfulneſs, ſources of ſacred inſtruction were to be opened, from whence the waters of the ſanctuary were to be copiouſly diſperſed and enjoyed in great abundance in diſtant places—That in the wilderneſs, in countries formerly barren and uncultivated, there were to be collected together many of thoſe, who, endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, ſhould plentifully diſpenſe the ordinances of the goſpel—And that thoſe people who were ſignificantly repreſented by dry land, who had continued for long time deſtitute of the word and Spirit of God, were to be favoured with conſtant plentiful ſupplies of the choiceſt ſpiritual bleſſings, whereby they ſhould be refreſhed and comforted. By theſe pleaſant images, taken from the natural world, is exhibited the deſirable change which the Lord God was to produce in the church, and the plentiful proviſion that he was to make for advancing their happineſs aud conſolation.—That nothing may be wanting to complete their felicity, he farther declares,

19 I will plant in the wilderneſs the cedar, the ſhittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree: I will ſet in the deſart the fir tree, *and* the pine, and the box tree together.

Other important benefits are here promiſed to the faithful ſervants of God, in beautiful figurative language. Seven different kinds of trees are mentioned, and as ſeven is a number ſometimes uſed in ſcripture to denote perfection, ſome writers have ſuppoſed that it here ſerves to expreſs the extenſive protection, ſupport, and conſolation which God aſſures his people he will confer upon them.—Some of the trees ſpecified, as the box, are uſeful for ſhelter from ſtorms, from piercing cold, and ſcorching heat. Some of them are remarkable for magnificent appearance and

and excellent timber, ſerving both for ornament and uſe, as the cedar and the fir tree. Some of them afford the beſt means of obtaining light, nouriſhment, and the cure of various diſtempers, as doth the oil tree. Now when God foretels that he will plant them together in the wilderneſs, the prediction may import, that in the courſe of his providence he will raiſe up inſtruments to protect, to adorn, to illuminate, to cheriſh, and comfort his ſervants. In the more figurative ſenſe, it intimates, that the Lord God would raiſe up, for the benefit of his church, men of diſtinguiſhed eminence and uſefulneſs, ſuch as judges and generals, to afford them protection; rulers and governors, who ſhould prove both ornamental and uſeful to them; and choice miniſters of the word, from whoſe doctrine they were to derive defence from evil, ſpiritual nouriſhment, and conſolation.—If the deſign of God in giving us promiſes is that we may be thereby excited to cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in his fear; much more ought the actual enjoyment of the benefits contained in them, to promote theſe ſalutary purpoſes. All the mercies we receive are intended to improve our ſpiritual ſtate, particularly theſe now mentioned; and good were it for us that we had not enjoyed them, if we are not thereby made holier, and wiſer, and better.

20 That they may ſee, and know, and conſider, and underſtand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Iſrael hath created it.

Variety of expreſſions are employed to deſcribe the happy effects that were to reſult from the fulfilment of the above predictions. The people of God, obſerving his hand in the liberal communications he grants them, of neceſſary bleſſings in anſwer to their prayers, ſhall be induced to give him the glory and praiſe due to his name. Words are multiplied to expreſs

preſs the ſeveral operations requiſite to become properly acquainted with the author of their mercies. —*That they may ſee* to whom they are indebted; they ſhall not only behold providential diſpenſations with their bodily eyes, but they ſhall diligently attend to them with their minds. By acting in this manner, they ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who only take a tranſient view of the works of God, and do not ſurvey them ſteadily, in connection with their divine author, and the noble purpoſes they were intended to promote—*That they may know*, and acquire a certain thorough practical acquaintance with the operations of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, manifeſt in the ſurpriſing events that God bringeth to paſs, for the benefit of his church.—*And conſider*. Many thoughtleſs perſons ſee and know what they do not lay to heart. But God expects that his people will ſo regard his works as to perceive his hand in them, and learn to diſcriminate the happy ſtate of them that fear him, from their condition that fear him not.—*And underſtand together*. By obſervation, knowledge, and conſideration, they may clearly diſcover the glorious ſovereignty and dominion of God, diſplayed in the inſtruments he employs, in the compaſſion which he ſhews, and the favours he beſtows upon his people. Thus they become ſenſible, that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to ſuch as keep his covenant, and attain to comfortable experience of the loving kindneſs of the Lord—They ſee the hand of the Lord hath done this, that by his mighty power, without any foreign aſſiſtance, he makes ample proviſion for his ſervants; he removes every obſtacle that lay in the way of their deliverance, and ſeaſonably confers upon them thoſe ſubſtantial benefits, which render their ſituation pleaſant and comfortable, to the glory of his great name, who is frequently denominated the Holy One of Iſrael.—Let us meditate of all God's works, and talk of his doings, and praiſe him for his wonderful works to the children of men, whereby he demonſtrates his power

and preſence, eſpecially for thoſe precious bleſſings by which he enriches and adorns his church.—The late biſhop of London conſiders this prediction, as expreſſing God's mercy to the Jews, on their return from Babylon; in ſupplying them with abundant water, when diſtreſſed with thirſt, and in affording them relief when fainting with heat in their journey, deſtitute of ſhelter; by cauſing ſhady trees, and thoſe of the talleſt and moſt beautiful kinds, to ſpring up for their defence *. It ſeems eſpecially to have been intended to revive and ſolace the dejected minds of God's ſervants, in the firſt ages of the Chriſtian church, under the various hardſhips and diſtreſſes they ſuſtained. You may read its fulfilment, in the figurative ſenſe of the words, in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and in ſubſequent hiſtories of the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt.

21 ¶ Produce your cauſe, ſaith the LORD; bring forth your ſtrong *reaſons*, ſaith the King of Jacob.

After the above digreſſion, our Prophet returns to challenge idolaters and their abettors, to adduce an inſtance of their idols having done any thing in favour of their votaries, comparable to what the God of Iſrael hath wrought for his people. He urges them to ſpecify any circumſtance whereby their true and proper divinity could be evinced, and demands their compliance with his requeſt; of the reaſonableneſs and juſtice of which they muſt have been ſenſible.—*Bring forth your ſtrong reaſons*, if you have any in reſerve, to ſupport the cauſe you eſpouſe. Decline not to introduce whatever argument you apprehend may ſerve to juſtify your conduct, and give it all the weight it is capable of bearing. That this demand might have the greater force, our Prophet ſubjoins two illuſtrious titles of the true God, in whoſe name he now ſpake and acted—*Saith the Lord.* This is the

* See his note on ver. 19.

the ſovereign pleaſure of the eternal Jehovah, who is, and who was, and who is to come. *The King of Jacob*, the ſupreme Lord and Lawgiver of the poſterity of the patriarch who was called by that name, who exerciſes ſupreme dominion over them, and according to his will diſpenſes to them the moſt ſubſtantial favours.

22 Let them bring *them* forth, and ſhew us what ſhall happen: let them ſhew the former things, what they *be*, that we may conſider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

The partizans of idolatry are here urged to produce, if in their power, the proof of the divinity of their gods, that is derived from the prediction of future contingent events. Divine honours cannot with juſtice be claimed by any one who doth not poſſeſs this power, which muſt be acknowledged to be the glorious prerogative of him who is truly God. Future events may be diſtributed into two claſſes, *viz.* Thoſe which may be denominated neceſſary; becauſe, under the influence of divine providence, they proceed from certain determined cauſes, which uniformly operate, and are invariably ſucceeded by the ſame effects. Theſe may be eaſily foretold; but they are not the things which are intended. There are other things which are called fortuitous or contingent, that ariſe from unforeſeen uncertain cauſes, which are beyond the reach of human ſagacity and penetration, and that are altogether unknown to mankind, until they actually come to paſs. Of this latter ſort are the things to happen, whereof Iſaiah ſpeaks, and of which he demands an account from his antagoniſts; that they might give convincing proof, that their gods could have juſt claim to the honours due to deity; that their nature was really divine, and that nothing exceeded their underſtanding and knowledge.—*Shew us what ſhall happen*, &c.

Publiſh

Publiſh with confidence, a clear and accurate ſtatement of the whole ſeries of events, which have taken place ſince the commencement of time, and of the things that ſhall hereafter come to paſs unto the end of the world. Point out exactly the order and the time in which they ſhall occur, and the circumſtances wherewith they ſhall be attended. Nothing leſs than perfect infinite knowledge muſt belong to God, to whom all his works are known, from the beginning unto the end, who receives the addreſſes of all his intelligent creatures, who is intimately acquainted with their various ſituations, and ſeaſonably ſupplies all their wants. If, then, the idols which you ſerve are indeed what you imagine, let them give evidence of the juſtice of their claim, by exhibiting a faithful narration of memorable events that have happened in time paſt, which have either eſcaped the notice of the hiſtorian, or which have ſomehow been buried in oblivion—And by delivering diſtinct predictions of things, that ſhall come to paſs in future diſtant periods, into which human ſagacity and foreſight cannot penetrate. The deſign of this requiſition is—*That we may conſider them*, and that with deliberate attention we may examine their pretenſion to the divine honours which they receive; or, as the Hebrew word denotes, that we may ſet our hearts upon them, and know the latter end of them, become acquaint with things which ſhall be hereafter, and how they ſhall eventually terminate.

23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be diſmayed and behold it together.

By granting the requeſt I now make, the controverſy betwixt you, the ſtrenuous ſupporters of idolatry, and me, the ſervant of the living God, may be ſoon decided.—Such a clear extenſive knowledge of futurity is here ſuppoſed to belong excluſively to God,

God, as diſcriminates him from all thoſe who by nature are not gods; ſuch a knowledge, that could any one beſide him demonſtrate that he poſſeſſed, his deity ſhould be confeſſed. To this deciſive evidence the Moſt High God is pleaſed to ſubmit his title and character to be tried; by this proof he would have the pretenſions of the gods of the nations to be examined. If infallible foreknowledge of future events, even the leaſt, the greateſt, the moſt ſecret, and the moſt remote, be the peculiar unqueſtionable prerogative of the Divinity; then they who are unacquainted with them are not gods; then Jehovah, who knoweth and hath declared them, is the true God.—*Yea, do good, or do evil.* Thoſe who were honoured as gods are called upon to give another evidence of their deity, by amply recompenſing their worſhippers, and by puniſhing thoſe who contemned them. The God of Iſrael, who directs all human affairs by his righteous providence, never fails to remunerate his upright ſervants, by conferring upon them important benefits; and to inflict awful judgments upon thoſe who diſhonour and deſpiſe him. Hereby we know that he is God. Do you, then, in like manner demonſtrate that you are gods, by reſcuing your votaries from the enemies and dangers to which they are expoſed, by enriching them with the moſt ſubſtantial bleſſings, and by inflicting remarkable puniſhments on thoſe who ſlight and deride your ſervice; thus overthrow and bring to ruin your oppoſers. The truth is affirmed by the prophet Jeremiah, 'Be not afraid of 'them, (*viz.* the idols of the heathen) they cannot 'do evil, neither alſo is it in them to do good *.' The gods whom the nations ſerved were the creatures of their own fancy, formed by their own hands, incapable of action; and therefore no ſufficient reaſon can be aſſigned why men ſhould be afraid of them, or expect to ſee any real advantage reſult from doing them homage.—It is the glorious prerogative of Jehovah, whereby he is diſtinguiſhed from every falſe

* Jer. x. 5.

falſe god, that he doth good and evil. Good of every kind, and puniſhment of all ſorts, proceed from God, though often conveyed by means of our fellow creatures; and in both inſtances his operations ought to be contemplated and admired. This truth properly impreſſed on our minds would enhance the value of all the good we receive, and alleviate every calamity that befals us in the courſe of providence.

24 Behold ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that* chooſeth you.

Since the active ſupporters of idolatry could not produce any proofs of the divinity of the gods whom they ſerved, our Prophet repreſents them as truly contemptible. *Behold*, attentively conſider the extreme folly and abſurdity of your vain ſuperſtition, which far from contributing to your real advantage, is highly prejudicial to your beſt intereſts. An idol, properly ſpeaking, is nothing in the world. Falſe gods have nothing correſponding to the ideas of their deluded worſhippers; they have mouths, but they ſpeak not; eyes, but they ſee not; ears, but they hear not; noſes, but they ſmell not; hands, but they handle not; feet, but they walk not. Conſider then, how unreaſonable your conduct in honouring them as God, who are really nothing; in conſequence of which, you are of nothing; you are effects that have not a cauſe; creatures, who have not a Creator. Beſides—*Your work is of nought*, or worſe than nothing. Nothing cannot do you any injury, but your groſs ſuperſtition is much worſe than nothing, and is criminal, hurtful, and dangerous in the extreme. Far from recommending you to the favour of the true God, or being of any avail to obtain righteouſneſs and ſalvation, that it provokes his indignation, and deſerves aggravated condemnation.—*An abomination is he that chooſeth you.* Truly contemptible is that man whoſe mind is ſo depraved,

praved and vitiated, that in ſpite of reaſon and conſcience, is deceived and deceives himſelf, is addicted to the moſt odious idolatrous practices, and prefers them to the worſhip and ſervice of the only living and true God. Such perſons are juſtly objects of abhorrence; yea, in the emphatical language before us, they are an abomination in the ſight of God and good men.

25 I have raiſed up *one* from the north, and he ſhall come: from the riſing of the ſun ſhall he call upon my name; and he ſhall come upon princes, as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

From general proofs of the glory of the God of Iſrael, our Prophet now deſcends to ſpecify a particular one, whereby he demonſtrates the conſummate knowledge and irreſiſtible power of Jehovah. Though the perſon's name alluded to is not mentioned, it ſeems highly probable, that Cyrus king of Perſia, was the illuſtrious prince who is here intended. This mighty conqueror, God raiſed up, as foretold in the 2d verſe of this chapter, to execute the important purpoſes to which he was deſtined by divine providence. This renowned hero, with his well diſciplined army, came from Midea, ſituated to the north, and from Perſia, which lay to the eaſt of Judea.—*From the riſing of the ſun ſhall he call upon my name.*—Having heard of the fame and glory of the true God, which had been ſpread abroad by means of Daniel, and other holy men that were employed about the court of Darius, who iſſued the memorable decree recorded in the book of Daniel, (chap. vi. 25. and following verſes,) wherein all people that dwell on the earth, are required to fear before the living God, &c.—Though in early life, he perhaps did not do him homage, yet it plainly appears, from the remarkable edict mentioned by Ezra, chap. i. 2. that he acknowledged the Lord God of heaven had given

given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and charged him to build him a houſe at Jeruſalem. In this manner, did this celebrated eaſtern monarch accompliſh this prediction.—*And he ſhall come upon princes as upon mortar*, &c. The princes and generals, with their forces, againſt whom he marched, were as incapable of making effectual oppoſition to his victorious troops, as the clay to reſiſt thoſe who tread it, that it may be prepared for uſeful purpoſes, and for coming into the hands of the potter, who forms it according to his pleaſure.

26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know; and before time that we may ſay, *He is* righteous, yea, *there is* none that ſheweth, yea, *there is* none that declareth, yea, *there is* none that heareth your words.

The Lord God would not only bring to paſs the predictions contained in the preceding verſe, in their proper ſeaſon, (which are therefore delivered, as if they had been already accompliſhed;) but he, and he alone, foretold theſe things long before they happened. Who, beſide the God of Iſrael, hath declared from the beginning of the world, and in ſubſequent early periods of time, future improbable unexpected events. If there be any ſuch individual on the face of the earth, let him ſtand forth and exhibit ſatisfying evidences of the juſtice of his claim.—*That we may know*, &c. That we may acknowledge that he poſſeſſes one prerogative peculiar to Deity, and that he is well entitled to eſteem, ſervice and obedience.—*That he is righteous*, that he is not a baſe impoſtor, but one that hath unqueſtionable right to the character he aſſumes; or as the Hebrew word denotes, that he is true and no deceiver, and what he ſaith is certain, eſtabliſhed on ſound principles, and ſupported by convincing reaſons. In reply it is added—*Yea, there is none that ſheweth*, &c. There is not one of the human race who can place before our

view

view inſtances of this ſort.—No one except the prophets of the living God, ever foretold the event alluded to, ſo that the world muſt have remained in perfect ignorance of the matter until its accompliſhment; had not God been pleaſed to make it known by prophecy —Yea, no one ever heard a report of any ſuch thing, nor was the leaſt notice of the ſubject communicated from any other quarter. From all which, the utter incapacity of mankind, and the idols which they worſhipped, to foretel things future, may be naturally inferred.

27 The firſt *ſhall ſay* to Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jeruſalem one that bringeth good tidings.

Theſe words ſeem to have ſpecial reference to the fulfilment of the above prediction reſpecting Cyrus. If Almighty God here ſpeaks of himſelf under the deſignation of the Firſt, in alluſion to the character he claims in the 4th verſe of this chapter, as ſome writers have ſuppoſed; it ſerves to intimate his eternal exiſtence, his tranſcendent excellence, his right of precedence to all thoſe who ever received divine honours; and that he was the firſt who foretold the appearance of Cyrus, the deliverer of his people from captivity at Babylon, and the overthrow of that great empire. In the proſpect of this important event, he was about to raiſe up prophets and public teachers, as Micah, Jeremiah, and others, who were accurately to obſerve the firſt appearances of the execution of the divine counſels, which they were to announce to his people, ſaying,—*Behold, behold them*: ſtanding on their watch tower, about the time to which the prophecies referred, to mark the firſt movements of the nations that preſaged their accompliſhment, they were to give immediate notice to the inhabitants of Zion, that the period was at hand wherein the predictions relative to the events above mentioned, were to receive their completion. And they

were to call upon the people attentively to obſerve the exact correſpondence betwixt the prophecies delivered by the ſervants of God, and the diſpenſations of his providence. See, ſee the things foretold by the prophets of the Moſt High, coming to paſs in the manner, at the time, and by the inſtruments which at a great diſtance they faithfully delineated.

And I will give to Jeruſalem, &c. Probably Cyrus king of Perſia, was the perſon primarily intended here, who by his royal proclamation throughout all his kingdom, decreed that whoſoever of all his people was willing, the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up to Jeruſalem.—And let the men of his place help him with ſilver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beaſts, beſide the free will offerings for the houſe of God that is in Jeruſalem*. This edict muſt indeed have brought good tidings to the Jewiſh people; and thus was the prediction literally verified, which was afterward more ſignally accompliſhed by Jeſus Chriſt, of whom Cyrus was in ſome reſpects an eminent type. This illuſtrious, this amiable prince of peace, God raiſed up, and gave to his church, which is often denominated Jeruſalem; that he might preach good tidings unto the meek, that he might bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the priſon to them that are bound†. By him peace hath been proclaimed on earth, and good will manifeſted to the ſons of men; through him is preached the remiſſion of ſins; and by him is promiſed the gift of the Holy Spirit, to diſpoſe us to comply with his proclamation of mercy. Thankful for ſuch a glorious meſſenger, and reviving meſſage, which every where breathes benignity and kindneſs, let us cordially receive and improve the joyful tidings that he hath publiſhed.

28 For I beheld, and *there was* no man; even among them, and *there was* no counſellor,

* See Ezra i. 2, 3, 4. † Chap. lxi. 1.

ſellor, that when I aſked of them, could anſwer a word.

The Lord God here declares, that having looked down from heaven, and attentively obſerved the ſons of men, he ſaw that there was not one of the pretended prophets, diviners, or ſoothſayers, among the Gentile nations, who had intimated the leaſt knowledge of the above predicted event. The Chaldean magicians, aſtrologers, and ſorcerers, who were renowned for knowledge and penetration, had not diſcovered any acquaintance with the ſubject, nor given the leaſt hint reſpecting it; but on the contrary, had ſpoken of the future proſperity of the Babyloniſh empire. The reſult of the ſtricteſt inveſtigation relative to this matter, is expreſſed in theſe words—*Even among them, there was no counſellor* who profeſſed to deliberate on affairs of this ſort, or who made the higheſt pretenſions to wiſdom and diſcernment, that had foretold what God declared was to come to paſs. When interrogated, and required to give what information they were able to communicate, they were entirely ſilent, and could not give any reply.

29 Behold, they *are* all vanity: their works *are* nothing: their molten images *are* wind and confuſion.

Theſe words expreſs the ſum of the preceding argument, the inference deduced from the whole diſcourſe, introduced with a note of attention, to excite the more diligent conſideration of the truth that they contain. The idols, from which the heathen nations expected the revelation of future events, which our prophet does not ſeem to have judged worthy of being named, were baſe impoſtors. They were not what they pretended to be, nor what their votaries vainly imagined that they were, and ſo all dependance on them for direction, aſſiſtance, and deliverance, was fruitleſs and abſurd.—*Their works are nothing.*

nothing. All the artifices that were employed to delude men, and the ſubtile machinations whereby they endeavoured to impoſe on the credulous and unwary, were deceit and falſehood. After impartial examination, it plainly appears, that as an apoſtle ſpeaks, an idol is nothing in the world, and they that make and ſerve them are like unto them.—Their molten images are wind and confuſion. Thoſe images that were formed of melted metal, however ſolid and maſſy, are pronounced to be wind, to expreſs their inſignificance, and to intimate that thereby multitudes were greatly agitated, though they were utterly incapable of imparting to them any ſubſtantial advantage.—*And confuſion.* Inſtead of doing men any eſſential ſervice, they contributed to their diſappointment, ſhame, and diſgrace.—Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter, in the acknowledgment of the Iſraelites after they received ſatisfying evidence, that of a truth God was among them; 'the Lord he 'is God, the Lord he is God.' They ſhall all be confounded that worſhip graven images, that boaſt themſelves of idols; worſhip him all ye gods. 'My little 'children, keep yourſelves from idols; flee from idola-'try.'—And now, what doth the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to ſerve the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your ſoul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his ſtatutes, which I command you this day, for good*.

* See Deut. x. 12, 13.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

THE ſecond diſcourſe, compriſed in the fourth book of Iſaiah's prophecies, commences with this chapter, and extends, according to the hypotheſis which I have adopted, to ver. 5. incluſive of the 44th chapter. It may be diſtributed into two parts, the former of which is contained in the chapter that lies before us.—The omnipotence, and omniſcience of Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, having been clearly eſtabliſhed, and the controverſy betwixt the ſervant of the living God, and thoſe who ſupported idolatry decided.—Our prophet brings forth into full view, an illuſtrious perſonage, in the character of the ſervant of Jehovah, and of a great teacher; who by his pure, ſalutary, and comfortable doctrine, was to enlighten the Gentiles, and to turn them from their vain ſuperſtition, and idolatrous worſhip. He exhibits this eminent Prophet, as preſent among thoſe whom he addreſſes, as choſen, approved, and ſuſtained by the Lord God in executing the important work aſſigned him, of being the light of the world, and the inſtructor of the Gentiles, ver. 1.—He deſcribes the peculiar condeſcending manner in which he was to perform his benevolent office; the glorious ſucceſs wherewith it was to be attended, and the reaſons or grounds which were to give riſe to theſe happy effects, ver. 2—9.—Turning to the Gentiles, he calls upon them to celebrate the praiſes of the true God, for the ineſtimable benefits he had extended unto them, which for a long time had been withholden, ver. 10—17.—After which, he addreſſes his countrymen the Jews, ſharply reproving them for their negligence and contempt of the bleſſings, offered to them by the word of ſalvation, on account of which ſevere judgments are denounced againſt them, ver. 18—25.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLII.

BEHOLD my ſervant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my ſoul delighteth: I have put my ſpirit upon him; he ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

A magnificent intereſting ſcene is here exhibited, worthy of the admiring contemplation of all, eſpecially of us who are ſinners of the Gentiles. I ſuppoſe that the Son of God, the great Prophet of the Lord, the Light of the world, is the perſon we are invited to behold. The voice which came from heaven, ſaying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well 'pleaſed*,' appears plainly to have alluded to this prophecy. To this very paſſage that is now before us, the apoſtle Matthew directly refers, when, having mentioned that Jeſus Chriſt healed the diſeaſed among the multitudes which followed him, he immediately adds, 'that it might be fulfilled which was 'ſpoken by Eſaias the prophet, Behold my ſervant†,' &c. Simeon alſo, who waited for the conſolation of Iſrael, when he embraced the child Jeſus, and Paul, in his eloquent diſcourſe before king Agrippa, ſeem to have had in view the words under conſideration. From theſe remarkable circumſtances, in connection with what is here ſaid concerning this illuſtrious perſon, it is evident that Jeſus Chriſt, the promiſed Meſſiah, the great Mediator between God and man, is the ſubject of this prophecy. The deſignation of ſervant did not originally belong to him, but became applicable to him; becauſe, in the form and capacity of Jehovah's ſervant, he executed with the greateſt alacrity whatever he gave him in commandment. Entruſted with the affairs of his Father's houſe, he was entirely devoted to God and his ſervice, and was continually employed about his Father's buſineſs. He came down from heaven to do the will

* Mat. iii. 17. † Chap. xii. 17, 18.

will of him that ſent him, and to obey the difficult command of laying down his life and taking it up again. He became obedient to death, even the death of the croſs; and never wearied of his arduous work until he could ſay, It is finiſhed. And as the reward of his faithful ſervice, he was highly exalted, and a name given him above every name.—Behold, ſaith Jehovah, my ſervant, contemplate and admire him whom I will raiſe up to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be my ſalvation to the ends of the earth.

Whom I uphold. Jehovah having laid our help on one that is mighty, and exalted one choſen out of the people, he upheld him throughout the whole mediatorial work that was given him to do; and, according to promiſe, his hand eſtabliſhed and his arm ſtrengthened him. The Lord God, who had graciouſly ſuſtained all his miniſtering ſervants in every age, whilſt employed in performing his work with which they were entruſted, did, in a peculiar manner, afford all neceſſary ſupport to him who is emphatically ſtiled his righteous ſervant; who was to bear our iniquities, and by his knowledge was to juſtify many. Follow him throughout the whole of his humiliation, and you muſt acknowledge, to his immortal honour, and the everlaſting comfort of his church, the truth and juſtice of what is here affirmed. When aſſaulted by the powers of darkneſs, and tempted of the devil, Jehovah upheld him by the power of the Spirit, and the miniſtry of angels, to whom he gave charge to keep him in all his ways, and to bear him up in their hands. When expoſed to the inveterate malice and inſults of wicked men, he dwelt in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, he abode under the ſhadow of the Almighty; he ſaid of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortreſs, my God in whom I truſt. When teaching the way of God in truth, and glorifying him on the earth, he gave him a mouth and wiſdom, that all his adverſaries were not able to gainſay or reſiſt, which obliged them to confeſs that never man ſpake like this man. And when

when he conflicted with the king of terrors, and entered into the territories of the grave, he was ſo glorioufly ſupported, that he overcame death, and ſent forth trophies of his victory from the receptacles of the dead. In this manner was the prediction verified.

Mine Elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth. Jeſus Chriſt, the true Meſſiah, is denominated with peculiar propriety the Elect of Jehovah, becauſe in infinite love he was deſtined to execute the moſt arduous and honourable work of glorifying him on the earth, of manifeſting his name to the men he had given him out of the world, of redeeming them to God by his own blood, and ſhewing them the path of life. Jehovah appointed him the Governor of the nations, the Prince of the kings of the earth; he gave him power over all fleſh, and conſtituted him the Head and Saviour of the church, the Inſtructor, the Lord, the Righteouſneſs, the Strength, the Salvation, and Glory of his people.—*In whom my ſoul delighteth.* This teſtimony was repeatedly given to him by a voice from heaven, which announced theſe words, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed.' In him Jehovah delighted, as his moſt holy perfect image, completely furniſhed with all the excellencies, the gifts, and graces of the Spirit, requiſite to diſplay his glory, and to accompliſh the redemption of his peculiar people, whom he had choſen for his inheritance. He delighted in his perfect obedience, who always did the things that pleaſed him; and now declares that he is well pleaſed for his righteouſneſs' ſake. So perfectly ſatisfied was God with the offering of Jeſus Chriſt, that it was to him a ſacrifice of a ſweet ſmelling ſavour, in behalf of thoſe for whom it was preſented. And in him in whom he thus intenſely delights, he hath choſen his people; in him they are juſtified, called, adopted, accepted, ſanctified, and preſerved. Contemplating them in his beloved, he beholds no iniquity in them, they appear as objects do to us through a coloured medium, tinged with a particular lovely hue; through the incenſe of

of his mediation, they become more acceptable to him, than thoſe things ſeem to us which are ſcented with the richeſt perfume.—Let us then place our ſupreme delight in the beloved Son of God, and cheriſh the ſame ſentiments concerning his character and office, which the Lord God hath here expreſſed.

I have put my Spirit upon him in more abundant meaſures than upon any other of my ſervants. To every one of them, grace is given according to the meaſure of the gift of Chriſt; on him the Spirit was plentifully conferred, as much as his human nature was capable of receiving. Previous to his baptiſm the Spirit reſted upon him, and made him of quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord; after that period, when the viſible pledge of the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon him, he is ſaid to have been full of the Holy Ghoſt. Being completely furniſhed with his gifts and graces, he was perfectly qualified for the faithful, honourable diſcharge of his mediatorial character. It pleaſed the Father that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell, and that in all things he ſhould have the pre-eminence. By the Spirit which the Lord God put upon him, he became the ornament of human nature; he was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek, and to execute with propriety and dignity his prophetical office—He was conducted, ſupported, and comforted throughout the whole courſe of his miniſtry, obedience, and ſufferings, and enabled to perform thoſe ſtupendous miracles whereby his miſſion was atteſted and confirmed. Intimately acquainted with the counſels and ways of God, and poſſeſſed of conſummate wiſdom, prudence, eloquence, and other qualifications, he imparted the moſt ſublime inſtructions, in a manner far ſuperior to all other teachers. Animated by invincible love to God, ardent zeal for his glory, and tender compaſſion toward ſinners of mankind; through the eternal Spirit, he offered himſelf without ſpot to God, a propitiation for ſin; in the exerciſe of faith, ſubmiſſion, patience,

and truſt, that he would uphold and crown him with honour and ſucceſs.

He ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. The word tranſlated *judgment* is uſed in various ſenſes in ſcripture: among others, it ſignifies an ordinance, or inſtitution, a rule, or plan. Here it denotes the doctrine of the goſpel, the ordinances of divine appointment, the way of ſalvation, the rule of righteouſneſs, according to which the ſentiments, the words, and the actions of men, ought to be governed, and ſhall finally be tried. It may compriſe whatever is agreeable to the principles of truth and equity, with every thing that is juſtly founded upon them, and derived from them—The judicial ſentence that God hath pronounced upon the character, the ſtate, and actions of men, which ſhall certainly be executed; together with the plan of their deliverance, deviſed by infinite wiſdom—This judgment God's ſervant ſhall bring forth from the treaſures of knowledge wherewith his mind was to be replete; and ſhall place them fully in the view of the Gentile nations, as the ground of their faith, and the rule of their conduct. This prediction the apoſtle Matthew declares was fulfilled, when Jeſus Chriſt retiring from his enemies, preached in Galilee, where his audience conſiſted not only of Jews, but of people from Syria, Idumea, Tyre, and Sidon. And in following ages, by means of the apoſtles and other miniſters, it hath been ſtill farther verified, as the inhabitants of this highly favoured iſland can amply teſtify.—Let us, brethren, have recourſe to him on whom God hath put his Spirit, that he may teach us to diſcriminate truth from error, good from evil; that with ſpiritual men we may judge all things, and approve the things that are more excellent, being filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding.

2 He ſhall not cry, nor lift up, nor cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreet.

Theſe

Theſe words deſcribe the mild condeſcending manner in which this illuſtrious teacher was to exerciſe his office. Every kind of loud voice is certainly not excluded by theſe expreſſions; for when Jeſus Chriſt, with ardent zeal, and a juſt ſenſe of the high importance of the ſubjects of which he treated, publicly diſcourſed to the great multitudes that reſorted to him, he muſt doubtleſs have elevated his voice, and ſpoken with conſiderable vehemence. The prediction ſeems deſigned only to intimate, that he was not to cry or make a loud clamorous noiſe after the manner of thoſe who agitate controverſies in courts of judicature, who raiſe their voice to a high pitch, when ſtating their complaints, or anſwering the accuſations that are brought againſt them. Rather than excite contention, or bring a charge againſt any one, or uſe opprobrious threatening language, God's righteous ſervant would bear with patience and ſilence, the moſt daring affronts and injuries.—*Nor would he cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreet.* The words are not intended to affirm, that he was not to ſpeak aloud in the ſtreet; for he every where imparted inſtruction to thoſe who attended him; but are deſigned to intimate, that he was not to ſpeak in an oſtentatious manner, to attract popular applauſe, or to acquire worldly honour; that he was not to employ his powers of public ſpeaking to form a party, or to raiſe ſedition among the people. Though a great prophet like unto Moſes, and infinitely ſuperior to him, he was to perform his office with the greateſt modeſty and humility, deſtitute of external pomp and ſhew. He was to publiſh the goſpel of peace that tended to reconcile men to God, and to one another, without giving the leaſt diſturbance, in the temple, in the ſynagogues, and in houſes.—This prophecy was remarkably verified in Jeſus Chriſt, who never entered into any loud contentious diſputes, or uſed vociferous declamations, but diſcourſed in a plain ſimple impreſſive ſtile. And when at any time in ſelf-defence, he was obliged to diſpute with his adverſaries

verſaries, having replied to their cavils, ſolved their difficulties, and anſwered their objections, he quietly departed with his diſciples to the deſart, the mountain, or the ſea ſide. Accordingly the apoſtle Matthew, having recorded ſome of theſe circumſtances, immediately quotes the words before us, that it might be fulfilled which was ſpoken by Eſaias the prophet, ſaying, *&c.*—What an amiable example of prudence, humility, meekneſs, and every other grace doth Jeſus Chriſt exhibit for our imitation. Let us fix our attention on this beautiful inſtructive pattern, and endeavour through divine aſſiſtance, to copy it in our conduct.

3 A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and the ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench: he ſhall bring forth judgment unto truth.

The comfortable nature of Meſſiah's doctrine, and his gracious attention to the weakeſt of his people, is here repreſented in very ſignificant figurative language. Before the art of alphabetical writing was introduced, perſons communicated their thoughts by means of figures or ſhapes. Theſe ſymbolic characters, were early in uſe among the Egyptians, and from the antiquity and ſplendor of their nation, it was followed by others; particularly by the Iſraelites, who had been a long time among them, and conveyed with them this, among their other ſpoils into the land of Canaan.—The prophets of the Lord, readily adopted the practice, and by various repreſentative marks, ſignificant of the objects whereof they ſpake, they inſtructed the people. Hence the parables and figurative deſcriptions of characters with which their writings are variegated; a horn being uſed to denote power, a ſceptre to repreſent majeſty, a bruiſed reed and ſmoking flax, to ſignify thoſe who are feeble and languiſhing.—A reed is at beſt ſlender and weak, and being cruſhed, is incapable, without aſſiſtance, of

* Chap. xii. 10—19.

of bearing any weight; yea, itſelf needs to be ſupported. In this ſtate, it exhibits a proper image of a feeble perſon who is wounded in ſpirit, dejected in mind, unſtable in condition, and who, in the emphatical language of ſcripture, is broken in heart. Notwithſtanding he poſſeſſes ſome ſpiritual ſtrength, unfeigned repentance, weak faith, and ſincere deſires after the grace of God, yet he is depreſſed, humbled, and bowed down, on account of his great tranſgreſſions: he cannot raiſe up himſelf, or look with confidence to that God whom he hath offended. Such, I apprehend, is the debilitated ſtate of the perſon intended, who is farther repreſented in the following words—*The ſmoking flax*, or wick of a lamp, which through deficiency of oil, becomes very dim, and ready to go out, ſo that little remains but ſmoke. This well known figure, holds forth a ſtriking reſemblance of one in whom the exerciſe of ſpiritual life is much impaired, ſo that unleſs ſeaſonable aſſiſtance is adminiſtered, having ſuffered lamentable decays, it is ready to die, and is in danger of being extinguiſhed. It exhibits an inſtructive emblem of one, whoſe knowledge being obſcured by prejudices, his faith weak, his hope wavering, his light of holineſs becomes hardly perceptible. Still however, there remains ſome holy warmth in his affections, ſome divine light in his mind, however obſcure; ſome ability, though ſmall, to reſiſt temptations, and to perform duties.—Toward perſons of this deſcription, it is foretold, that Jehovah's ſervant ſhall diſcover the greateſt tenderneſs and compaſſion.

A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, &c. Theſe are ſome of the many expreſſions in Scripture, wherein much more is intended than expreſſed. Far from deſtroying thoſe who are feeble and languiſhing, or caſting them out of his ſight, he will graciouſly reſtore and revive them. After having been cruſhed by doubts, and fears, and ſorrows, he will mercifully uphold and ſtrengthen them, and thoroughly furniſh them for every good work.—He will not permit the

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ſacred fire of divine love, which he himſelf hath kindled, to be extinguiſhed for want of freſh ſupplies of grace, or by any external injuries to which they may be expoſed. He will ſtrengthen the things that are ready to die, and cauſe them to ſhine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.—This comfortable truth, he hath verified in ten thouſand inſtances; when his diſciples have been brought low, he hath helped them. The characters which he ſuſtains, the qualifications he poſſeſſes, the ſacred truſt committed to his charge, and the intimate relation in which he ſtands connected with the feeble among his flock, conſpire in calling forth his never failing tender compaſſion. Theſe, with other circumſtances that may occur to thoſe acquainted with the goſpel hiſtory, afford the moſt ſatisfying ſecurity, that neither internal weakneſs, nor external injuries, ſhall deprive the feebleſt Chriſtian of his divine maſter's gracious attention and ſupport. Review his whole conduct while on earth, and contemplate the convincing proofs that he gave of the fulfilment of this prediction. With what amiable affability and kindneſs did he inſtruct thoſe who were weak, as they were able to bear! What ſtriking evidences did he give, that he was indeed a merciful and faithful high prieſt, merciful to men, and faithful to God! And when about to aſcend in triumph unto heaven, with what exquiſite tenderneſs did he ſend this affectionate meſſage to his brethren, 'I 'aſcend, to my Father, and your Father; to my God, 'and your God!' I truſt that the experience of not a few among ourſelves, who when depreſſed with a ſenſe of their own weakneſs, have looked to him, and been enlightened, their ſtrength hath been renewed, their fears diſpelled, and their ſorrow turned into joy, can atteſt this reviving truth.

He ſhall bring forth judgment unto truth. Judgment may denote, as in the firſt verſe, the doctrine of the goſpel, the plan of mens ſalvation, the rule of righteouſneſs. This noble exhibition of wiſdom, prudence, and equity, Jeſus Chriſt was to bring forth

forth to view with ſuch perſpicuity, and to demonſtrate with ſuch convincing evidence, that it ſhould triumph over all oppoſition, and be acknowledged the truth of God. He was ſo to explain and inculcate this excellent doctrine, that it might appear to be the true way of obtaining ſalvation, and of ſerving God; in oppoſition to human knowledge, which is often fallacious, and to the Moſaic œconomy, that exhibited only a ſhadow of good things, which were then future. Or the expreſſion may be thus interpreted, in reference to the perſons deſcribed in the former part of the verſe. The Meſſiah ſhall ſend his goſpel, accompanied with the Holy Spirit, to enlighten their underſtandings, to purify their hearts, and to invigorate all their powers, ſo as to render them completely victorious, and more than conquerors over all their enemies. —Take heed that you abuſe not this comfortable doctrine, by negligence in duty, by indulgence in ſin, or contempt of the appointed means of obtaining ſpiritual ſtrength and conſolation. The aſſurances of victory given to the weakeſt of God's ſervants, ſuppoſe that they are ingaged in the ſpiritual warfare, and are intended to encourage them to ſtand to their arms, and to fight valiantly. Notwithſtanding Jeſus Chriſt informed the apoſtle Peter, that he had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, he required him to watch and pray, that he might not enter into temptation.

4 He ſhall not fail nor be diſcouraged, till he hath ſet judgment in the earth: and the iſles ſhall wait for his law.

Theſe words plainly intimate the perſevering diligence and glorious ſucceſs of this illuſtrous teacher. Thoſe who have been employed in inſtructing mankind, deficient oft-times in induſtry and zeal, or too precipitate in the meaſures they have adopted, becoming languid or weary, their expectations of ſucceſs have been fruſtrated. The great Prophet of the

Lord,

Lord, defective in neither of theſe reſpects, uſed unremitting aſſiduity and prudence in publiſhing and explaining his divine doctrine, until the whole ſyſtem was completed and publiſhed to the world. Notwithſtanding the great difficulties he had to ſurmount, his force was not abated or broken; he did not faint or grow weary, until he could ſay, It is finiſhed!—Nor was he to be diſcouraged, dejected, or intimidated by the mighty oppoſition he had to encounter, from the wickedneſs of men, and the powers of darkneſs. Poſſeſſed of invincible ſtrength and magnanimity, he never became remiſs, he never yielded to the formidable obſtacles that lay in his way, but inceſſantly continued firm and unſhaken, in mind and exertion until he yielded up the ghoſt.—*Till he ſet judgment in the earth.* He will never deſiſt from the proſecution of his arduous work, until he hath planted his goſpel among all the nations of the world, and by the efficacy of his word, accompanied with his Spirit, he hath eſtabliſhed among them his kingdom, that conſiſteth in righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, and brought them into ſubjection to his mild and equitable government.

And the iſles ſhall wait for his law. The Hebrew word tranſlated *iſles*, ſignifies alſo nations or countries *, whether encompaſſed by the ſea, or ſituated on the continent, and may here denote the Gentile nations. Theſe ſhall wait for the Meſſiah's law, the royal law of liberty, ſtampt with his authority, which points out the way of life and holineſs; or for his doctrine, that relates to righteouſneſs and ſalvation, and is deſigned to regulate the faith and practice of mankind. For this perfect law the Gentiles ſhall wait with longing expectation, conſcious of their abſolute need of this valuable treaſure. Though ignorant of the Meſſiah, and the promiſes of God, ſenſible of their need of inſtruction on ſome important topics, they were with ardent deſires to look for this neceſſary benefit. To this ſubject may be

* See Gen. x. 5.

be applied the words of the apoſtle Paul, who aſſerts that the Greeks, the more poliſhed heathen nations, ſeek after wiſdom; not only elegance of diction, the beauties of eloquence, acquaintance with the ſciences, and propriety of conduct, but alſo divine inſtruction on certain ſubjects. Hence the Meſſiah is called by the prophet Haggai, 'the deſire of all nations *.' The words may be rendered, *The iſles or nations ſhall place their hope or truſt in his doctrine*; which gives a good ſenſe to the prediction, intimating that the goſpel was not to be confined to the Jews, but extended alſo to the Gentiles, who were to receive it with faith and hope, as the means of their ſalvation. This expoſition exactly accords with the words of the apoſtle Matthew, who thus paraphraſes them, 'In his name ſhall the Gentiles 'truſt.' Such, according to this prophecy, ſhall be the extenſive ſpread and glorious ſucceſs of the goſpel of the Son of God, which in part hath been fulfilled; and to the more full accompliſhment we look forward with hope and joy.

5 ¶Thus ſaith God the LORD, he that created the heavens and ſtretched them out; he that ſpread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and ſpirit to them that walk therein.

The wonderful ſucceſs wherewith the doctrine of the Meſſiah was to be attended, is attributed to his ſolemn deſtination by the Lord God, to be the Light and the Salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. In this and the four following verſes, Jehovah is introduced in a manner truly magnificent, animating the Meſſiah to the faithful performance of his important work, amidſt every oppoſition; aſſuring him that he was deſtined, in his purpoſe, to be the common teacher and Saviour of all nations. In the preceding verſe, having pointed him out, commended and deſcribed him entering

* Chap. ii. 8.

tering on his arduous ſervice, the figure is changed; and the Lord God is here repreſented encouraging him to enter on his office, by promiſes of his aſſiſtance and ſupport. The addreſs commences with the greateſt ſolemnity and majeſty—*Thus ſaith God the Lord*, the eternal, unchangeable, omnipotent Jehovah, the ſource of exiſtence, life, order, beauty, and felicity—*He that created the heavens*, that wonderful mixture of light and air which is every where diffuſed around us, to which are owing the fine appearance and fruitfulneſs of the earth, with all the vegetable and animal life that pervades this material world—that immenſe expanded firmament which is adorned with the glorious orbs that illuminate this habitation of the children of men. He that formed without any aſſiſtance, and called into exiſtence by the word of his power, the celeſtial elements and planets; who ſtretched them out by his diſcretion, and eſtabliſhed them by his wiſdom—*He that ſpread forth the earth*, that formed and adjuſted every part of it with exquiſite ſkill, to be a ſuitable convenient place of reſidence for mankind; where we are plentifully furniſhed, not only with the neceſſaries, but with the conveniencies of life—*And that which cometh out of it*; ſuch as metals and ſtones of various kinds, fuel, trees, corns, herbs of every ſort, proper for furniſhing uſeful proviſion for man and beaſt. All theſe the great God ſpread forth into the bowels, and upon the ſurface of the earth, as infinite wiſdom and goodneſs judged beſt, to accompliſh the purpoſes of their formation and their no leſs wonderful diſpoſition.

He that giveth breath to the people upon it. Jehovah is the author, not only of vegetable, but of animal and rational life, wherewith he hath endowed men who live upon this earth. He hath beſtowed on them, in common with all terreſtrial animals, the principle of life, which is preſerved by means of reſpiration. In the words of the apoſtle Paul, 'He gi-'veth to all life, and breath, and all things *.' He hath

* Acts xvii. 25.

hath alſo formed them with a principle of rational life, with underſtanding, judgment, conſcience, memory, and other powers, which raiſe them far above inferior creation, which render them capable of receiving inſtruction by means of good doctrine, and of being governed by wholeſome laws. In the words of Elihu, 'He teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and 'maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven *. As he is the former of our bodies, ſo he is Father of our ſpirits, from whom they proceed, and to whom they return, when ſeparated from the bodies wherein they reſided. There is a ſpirit in man whereby he is actuated, and governed, and qualified to manage his affairs with diſcretion, which cometh from the Lord of hoſts, who is wonderful in counſel. This important prerogative God hath been pleaſed to confer on men who walk on the earth. With ſimilar ſublime language is the prophecy introduced that is recorded in the 12th chapter of Zechariah, 'Saith the Lord, 'who ſtretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the 'foundation of the earth, and formeth the ſpirit of 'man within him.'—What a grand deſcription is this! We are apt to be dazzled by the pomp and ſplendor of an earthly prince, attended by a vaſt retinue, ſurrounded by the nobles of the land, exhibiting proofs of majeſty, opulence, and power. How inſignificant is human greatneſs, in compariſon of the glory of the Lord God, whoſe garment is the light, whoſe throne is the heavens, whoſe footſtool is the earth, and who giveth breath and ſpirit to them that walk thereon. Let all the earth then fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world ſtand in awe of him.

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteouſneſs, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.

Theſe words were directed to the ſervant of Jehovah,

* Job xxxv. 11.

vah, by him who appointed him to be the teacher both of Jews and Gentiles. According to my ſovereign good pleaſure, I have deſigned thee, in my purpoſe; by my Spirit, I have qualified thee for the important office of enlightening the nations; and by the diſpenſations of my providence, I will open the way for the exerciſe of thy miniſtry. Chriſt Jeſus, the Mediator, did not aſſume to himſelf this honourable character, but was called of God, as was Aaron; he did not glorify himſelf, but was made prophet and high prieſt by him that ſaid unto him, Thou art my ſervant whom I have choſen. He was conſecrated to his office by the will and authority of God; from him, and not from any other, he received his commiſſion. How glorious the work to which he was called! It was no leſs than reſcuing men from ignorance, depravity, and bondage; and reſtoring them to light, liberty, and felicity. By its accompliſhment, he illuſtriouſly diſplayed the eclipſed glory of Jehovah, and acquired to himſelf renown and praiſe from his inſtructed ranſomed people, who with gratitude magnify him as the author of their ſalvation. Jehovah declares that he called the Meſſiah *in righteouſneſs*. His appointment was founded on the moſt equitable grounds. To him this office of right pertained; he only was able to diſcharge the duties of it with honour and ſucceſs; to manifeſt the righteouſneſs of God, to fulfil the promiſes made to the church, on which their faith and expectation are founded, and to relieve the neceſſities of thoſe who are ready to periſh.

And will hold thine hand, &c. I will ſupport thee in every trying emergency, I will ſuccour thee in every time of danger, I will encourage thee in every ſervice, and I will deliver thee out of all the ſevere afflictions which thou haſt to ſuſtain. By the peculiar care of my providence, and the plentiful communications of my Spirit, I will continually preſerve thee, and afford thee ample ſupport at all times and in all places. With this pleaſing proſpect fully in

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his view, the Meſſiah is introduced ſaying, 'I will 'bleſs the Lord at all times, and his praiſe ſhall be 'continually in my mouth *.'—*I will keep thee*, and defend thee from all evil, ſo that thou ſhalt be in perfect ſafety, amidſt the mighty oppoſition and virulent enemies, with which thou ſhalt have to contend. Of this preſervation he was repeatedly aſſured, and therefore he could not fail to enjoy the benefit of it. If the Lord was with the patriarch Jacob, to keep him in all places, will he not much more keep Jacob's Redeemer? If he keep the feet of his ſaints, ſurely he will keep the head of the church? If he keep his people as the apple of his eye, ſurely he will preſerve with infinite tenderneſs his righteous ſervant, his Elect in whom his ſoul delighteth. The moſt ſtriking evidences of this comfortable truth are recorded in the goſpel hiſtory. When his enemies took counſel againſt him, 'and 'roſe up and thruſt him out of the city, and led him 'to the brow of the hill, that they might caſt him 'down headlong, he paſſing through the midſt of 'them, went his way †.'

And give thee for a covenant of the people. Jeſus Chriſt cannot properly be called a covenant, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, which denotes a ſolemn agreement betwixt two parties. Things frequently bear the ſame name in ſcripture as in common language, which differ widely from one another. The Hebrew word tranſlated *covenant*, is derived from one that ſignifies to *cleanſe* or *purify*: it is uſed to expreſs whatever tends to remove the odious pollution of ſin, whereby mankind are defiled, rendered unfit to appear in the divine preſence, and to enjoy communion with God. The promiſes and commandments of God being given for this purpoſe, they are ſometimes ſpoken of as his covenant. Eſpecially is this deſignation given to the Meſſiah, who cleanſes his people from all unrighteouſneſs, who waſhes them from their ſins, and purifies them unto

* Pſal. xvi. 7. xxxiv. 1. † Luke iv. 29, 30. See alſo Jo. vii. 30.

unto himſelf, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He is alſo the baſis on which the covenant betwixt God and man is eſtabliſhed; the Mediator, who hath reſtored the friendly intercourſe between them that had been interrupted; who, by his death, ratified and confirmed the promiſes of God, who became ſurety to diſcharge his peoples debts, and to preſerve them in the righteous ways of the Lord. By his perfect obedience, he acquired for them the Holy Spirit, with every bleſſing neceſſary to their complete purification from ſin, and final happineſs; yea, he himſelf is the ſum and ſubſtance of all promiſed bleſſings, on whoſe account they are beſtowed.—Jehovah, therefore, promiſes to give him for a covenant of the people. The expreſſion intimates, that his deſtination to this endearing character, and relation to his peculiar people, is the unconſtrained donation of ſovereign grace, and the wonderful diſplay of unparalleled love.—As we can receive nothing unleſs it be given, this rich preſent, freely conferred, authoriſes us to receive him for the purpoſes for which he is beſtowed. A moſt encouraging circumſtance this, which ought carefully to be attended to by all the people of every deſcription. And if perſons are reſpected according to their liberality, and the value of the benefits they confer; what eſteem, what veneration, what gratitude are due to the Lord God!

For a light of the Gentiles. The name Gentiles compriſes all the nations of the earth, beſide the once highly favoured people, the poſterity of Abraham. During the Moſaic œconomy, God ſuffered all nations, except the Iſraelites, to walk in their own ways; in conſequence whereof they became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh hearts were darkened. Involved in ignorance reſpecting matters of the higheſt importance, they were ſtrangers to the covenants of promiſe, aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, without God, without Chriſt, and without hope in the world. When in this deplorable ſtate, the Elect of Jehovah was given to be a light unto them,

them. In the fulneſs of time, according to this prediction, the day-ſpring from on high did viſit us, to give light to thoſe that ſat in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace. The Sun of righteouſneſs hath ariſen with healing under his wings, and ſhone forth with meridian ſplendor, diffuſing the light of the glory of God among the heathen nations. The light of the world hath imparted to us the knowledge of ſalvation, thro' the remiſſion of ſins; and now the people that ſat in darkneſs, ſee a great light; and to them that were in the region and ſhadow of death, light is ſprung up.

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the priſoners from the priſon, *and* them that ſit in darkneſs out of the priſon houſe.

That the honour of Meſſiah, and the benefit he confers might be complete, our Prophet farther deſcribes the benevolent purpoſes for which he was to be given to the Gentiles. What avails light to thoſe who have not eyes to ſee? The averſion of multitudes to acknowledge the truth, clearly ſhews that the eyes of mankind, both of Jews and Gentiles, are blind. The propoſition ſtated in theſe words, is unqueſtionably true, and cannot be fairly evaded; for as the apoſtle Paul affirms, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs to him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*. Spiritually to diſcern the things which God hath revealed by his Spirit, is ſo to perceive their tranſcendent excellence and infinite importance, as to be ſuitably affected with them, and to apply them to the purpoſes for which they are revealed: this certainly is not done by natural men. The words of Jeſus Chriſt, ſpoken from heaven to Saul, afterward called Paul, are deciſive as to the fact. 'Delivering thee, (ſaid he) from 'the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I ſend 'thee,

* 1 Cor. ii, 14.

'thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from 'darkneſs to light*,' &c. Even the Jews, to whom God had revealed the doctrine of his holy word, and on whom he conferred many ſubſtantial advantages, were blinded by falſe prejudices, and involved in groſs ignorance of divine things. Hence our Lord declared, that 'the Phariſees were blind leaders of the 'blind †;' they like other people, were deſtitute of ſpiritual underſtanding of the way of ſalvation, and unacquainted with the myſtery of the goſpel.—Now Jeſus Chriſt was ſent to open theſe blind eyes, to reſtore ſight to thoſe who are ſpiritually blind; that they may behold the glory of Jehovah diſplayed in his works, that they may ſee the perfection and excellence of his law, the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, their periſhing condition by tranſgreſſion, the excellence of the Saviour, and their abſolute need of his righteouſneſs and Spirit.—That they may diſcern the preciouſneſs of God's promiſes, the beauties of holineſs, the hope of their calling, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Such are the glorious objects ſeen by the blind eyes when opened.

To bring out the priſoners from the priſon. This expreſſion may relate more eſpecially to the Jews, who before faith came, were kept under the law, ſhut up unto the faith which was afterward to be revealed‡: *i. e.* Until the promiſed Redeemer, the great object of the faith and hope of the church, made his appearance; they were kept in ſafe cuſtody, or guarded by the law, as princes by their life guards or fortreſſes by their garriſons. They were ſhut up, cloſely confined; as priſoners in a goal, they were not at liberty to go out, or to do what they pleaſed; and no way was left open for their deliverance or eſcape, but that of faith in Jeſus Chriſt, who was revealed in the laſt time. Under the ſtrongeſt obligations punctually to obſerve the rites and commandments enjoined by the law, every tranſgreſſion expoſed

* Acts xxvi. 17, 18. † Mat xv. 14. ‡ Gal. iii. 23.

poſed them to farther puniſhment, and faſtened more cloſely on their minds, the conſciouſneſs of ſin, and the curſes denounced againſt it. Such was the forlorn ſtate of the priſoners whom the ſervant of Jehovah was to redeem from under the law, and to bring forth from their confinement, that they might receive the adoption of ſons*.—*And them that ſit in darkneſs out of the priſon houſe.* This clauſe of the verſe, may have a particular reference to the Gentiles, who are deſcribed as ſitting in darkneſs, being not only deſtitute of ſpiritual light, but of eyes to diſcern the light, the excellence and importance of divine truths.—Having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, becauſe of the blindneſs of our heart. So deplorable was our ſtate, that like perſons cloſely confined in priſon, from whom the light is excluded, we had not the light of ſalutary truth to make manifeſt ſpiritual objects; nor yet the power of ſpiritual diſcernment. Such was our doleful condition, that we were enſlaved by ignorance and error, ſubject to diverſe luſts and pleaſures, fettered by the bonds of iniquity, haraſſed with dread of deſerved puniſhment, forcibly detained in thraldom by the prince of this world, and unable to extricate ourſelves; when God's righteous Servant was ſent to our relief, that he might bring us into a ſtate of light and liberty, happineſs and comfort.—O Lord, bring my ſoul out of priſon, that I may praiſe thy name†.

8 I *am* the Lord, that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praiſe to graven images.

Theſe words announce the glorious character and prerogative of the living and true God. The expreſſions, which are indeed ſublime, plainly intimate, that Jehovah is the only true God, and that the true God alone is Jehovah. Contemplate with veneration,

* Gal. iv. 4, 5. † Pſal. cxlii. 7.

and awe this great and dreadful name, which is exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe, that is excellent in all the earth, terrible among the heathen, and good before his ſaints. A learned critic in the Hebrew language hath obſerved, that the characters which denote the three different tenſes, are expreſſed in the name Jehovah. The letter *Jod*, at the beginning, being characteriſtic of the future tenſe; *Vau*, in the middle, of the participle preſent, and *He*, at the end, of the time paſt*. The apoſtle John, hath unfolded its import in the deſcription he gives of the glorious perſon, from whom he intreats grace and peace to the churches, 'Who is, who was, and who is to come,' (Rev. i. 4.) By this appropriate name, God proclaims his real ſelf-exiſtence, that he is eternal, independent, unchangeable; and therefore he will moſt certainly accompliſh all the promiſes he hath made to the Meſſiah and the church; whereby his righteouſneſs, grace, veracity, and other attributes ſhall be demonſtrated. When we think of the difficulties attending the work aſſigned to the Mediator, of delivering and enlightening Jews and Gentiles, how pleaſant and reviving to reflect, that the omnipotent Jehovah hath engaged to accompliſh it. O Iſrael, truſt then in the Lord; ye that fear the Lord, truſt in the Lord, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.

And my glory will I not give to another, &c. The honour due to his divine excellencies, the eſteem, the confidence, and the devout acknowledgments that they juſtly demand, the Lord God claims as his unqueſtionable right, which he will not permit to be alienated from him, and aſcribed to any other. Nor will he allow the tribute of gratitude, due to his infinite Majeſty, to be ſacrilegiouſly transferred to any creature or idol whatſoever. His glory and praiſe, the richeſt gems in his ſacred crown, he will poſſeſs alone, and will not part with them to any uſurper. This explicit declaration, affords the ſtrongeſt grounds whereupon faith and hope may reſt for the fulfilment of the above predictions reſpecting the great

* Diſſertatio Johannes Buxtorfii de nomine.

great Redeemer. It gives the moſt ample ſecurity which can be deſired, that Jehovah will extend his ſalvation to thoſe, who have aſcribed to others his glory and praiſe, and that in conſequence they ſhall unite in attributing to him alone the honour due to his name.—Whilſt we render unto man, the things that are man's, let us give unto God, the things that are God's, taking heed that we do not worſhip and ſerve the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.

9 Behold the former things are come to paſs, and new things do I declare: before they ſpring forth, I tell you of them.

Theſe words may be conſidered as affording a ſtriking proof, that the God in whoſe name our Prophet delivered theſe predictions, is Jehovah. That you may be fully convinced of this important truth, attentively conſider the former things that are come to paſs, exactly according to the prophecies of God's ſervants, not one of them have failed of their accompliſhment, all of them are verified. In this expreſſion, there may be reference to the wonderful deliverance of Iſrael from the power of the Egyptians, and the conqueſts they obtained over their powerful enemies, in order to their entering on the poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan.—*And new things do I declare*, &c. By foretelling approaching events, that are yet to happen, I ſet before you farther ſatisfying evidences, that the God in whoſe name I ſpeak, is the Lord. The new things here alluded to, may be the illumination and call of the Gentiles to participate in the ſalvation of the Meſſiah; that great unexpected event, which exhibits a wonderful diſplay of the riches of divine grace, and unfolds the myſtery hid from former generations, but clearly predicted in theſe prophecies. Prior to the leaſt appearance or proſpect of theſe events, I announce their certain approach, and inform you of them long before they take

take place; that you may be conſtrained to acknowlege the divinity of the God of Iſrael, that you may be ſatisfied of the truth of my miſſion, and that faith and hope may be excited to expect the fulfilment of what I have declared.—Do you likewiſe, my brethren, carefully obſerve the exact accomplishment of the prophecies, and promiſes recorded in this book, that perceiving the intimate correſpondence, betwixt the predictions and the events to which they refer, your faith in the word of God may be confirmed and eſtabliſhed.

10 Sing unto the LORD a new ſong, *and* his praiſe from the end of the earth; ye that go down to the ſea, and all that is therein; the iſles, and the inhabitants thereof.

The Lord God having manifeſted his name and his ſalvation to the iſlands that waited for his law, and having called the Gentiles to ſhare in theſe inеſtimable benefits, they are invited to celebrate the praiſes of Jehovah, who conferred upon them theſe precious bleſſings. By this diſpenſation of grace, the moſt ſubſtantial grounds of joy and gladneſs, of exultation and triumph were afforded them. For a long time, they had been ſitting in darkneſs, and in the region of death; now a great light was ariſen upon them: they had been ſhut up in the priſon houſe, detained in the moſt miſerable condition; now liberty, ſpiritual, glorious liberty, was proclaimed. Surely then, it well becomes people thus infinitely obliged by the moſt endearing kindneſs, to praiſe their great benefactor and deliverer, and to extol the goodneſs and grace they have experienced. This tribute of gratitude is to be conveyed by ſinging a new ſong; a ſong proper for renewed redeemed men to ſing, in the new creation or kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſuited to celebrate new mercies, prefigured by thoſe conferred on Iſrael in former times. The expreſſion often occurs in the Pſalms of David, where it denotes

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an ode of peculiar excellence; wherein the glorious attributes, with ſome ſplendid admirable new works of God, are magnified and exalted. In this ſenſe, the phraſe is uſed in the 98th Pſalm, which we learn from 1 Chron. xvi. king David delivered to be ſung on occaſion of temporal benefits, which repreſented ſpiritual bleſſings.

Prior to this period of the church, beſide the book of Pſalms, and the Song of Songs, there were compoſed the ſong that had been ſung by the Iſraelites at the Red Sea, after their wonderful deliverance, Exod. xv.—The ſong of Moſes, which a little before his death he gave to the congregation of Iſrael, Deut. xxxii.—The ſong of Deborah and Barak, Judg. v.—The ſong of Hannah, on the nativity of Samuel, 1 Sam. ii.—The ſong of David, on the death of Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. i.—The ſong of Iſaiah, repreſenting the unfruitfulneſs of the church, in chap. v.—The ſong of praiſe, chap. xii.—The ſong to excite confidence in God, chap. xxvi.—The ſong of Hezekiah after recovery, chap. xxxviii. None of theſe, it ſeems, were perfectly adapted to this occaſion; or the ſtructure and deſign of their compoſition did not altogether accord with preſent circumſtances; and therefore the inhabitants of the earth are required to ſing unto the Lord a new ſong. Or, perhaps they are directed to recite with gratitude and gladneſs, ſome of thoſe hymns which bear this inſcription, ſuch as the 33d, the 40th, the 96th and 98th pſalms. After the prophecies of Iſaiah were delivered, there are recorded in ſcripture, beſides the Lamentations of Jeremiah, written in the poetical or metrical ſtile; The ſong of Jonah, on account of his deliverance in chap. ii. of his book—The ſong of Habakkuk, wherein the power and righteouſneſs of Jehovah is celebrated, chap. iii.—The ſong of Mary, on ſaluting Elizabeth, Luke i. 46.—The ſong of Zacharias, on recovering the uſe of ſpeech, Luke i. 68.—The ſong of Simeon, expreſſive of gratitude on ſeeing the Meſſiah, Luke ii. 29.—The ſong of Moſes and the Lamb,

Lamb, in Revelation, chap. xv. Theſe are moſt, if not all of the ſongs contained in the Bible, which I take this opportunity of enumerating. *And his praiſe from the end of the earth*, &c. Whilſt the Gentiles are excited to celebrate the praiſes of God for his goodneſs, thoſe of them are particularly called upon, who dwell in places moſt remote from the land to which God had been peculiarly favourable, to unite in melodiouſly ſhewing forth the glory of Jehovah. Ye that inhabit the utmoſt parts of the earth, be not ſilent, but join the univerſal chorus, who laud and magnify the ever enduring mercy of the Lord of lords, who remembered us in our low eſtate.—*Ye that go down to the ſea*, &c. Merchants and mariners, who do buſineſs in the great waters, who ſee the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. —*The iſles, and the inhabitants thereof.* To excite univerſal thankſgivings to Jehovah from people of every deſcription, and of every place, the iſlands, with thoſe who reſide upon them, are invited to join in expreſſing gratitude and joy to God our Saviour, for the precious bleſſings of his ſalvation. The Lord hath made known his ſalvation, by the preaching of the goſpel; he hath openly ſhewed his righteouſneſs, whereby ſinners are juſtified in the ſight of the heathen. As his mercies extend to all nations, ſo all nations are exhorted to bear a part in this new ſong.

11 Let the wilderneſs and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock ſing: let them ſhout from the top of the mountains.

The ſalvation of the Meſſiah being extended, not only to countries more cultivated and acquainted with commerce, but alſo to the deſarts of Arabia; the people that dwell in theſe wild regions are alſo called to join in praiſing God. The wandering tribes which inhabited that vaſt deſart being favoured with the

the knowledge of the goſpel, ſhould expreſs their joy for the glad tidings with which it made them acquainted. Be not ſurpriſed that the cities in this large tract of country are required to lift up their voice; for we read in the prophecies of Jeremiah of the kings of Arabia, and the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the deſart *. Theſe rude but numerous people, which were the poſterity of Kedar, one of the ſons of Iſhmael, had cities and villages wherein they reſided; and to them the Prophet addreſſes this invitation.—By the inhabitants of the rock may be intended thoſe that dwelt in the chief and beſt fortified cities in Arabia Petræa, which were built on rocks and eminences.—By the mountains probably were intended thoſe celebrated ones, Paran, Horeb, and Sinai; ſituated in the ſame country, from the tops of which, were to be heard ſongs, even glory to the Lord. This variety of expreſſion, and diverſified deſcription, is intended to include the Gentile nations, enlightened by the great Redeemer, who are invited to lift up their voice, to ſing, and to ſhout with triumph, on account of the precious bleſſings they enjoyed through the goſpel.

12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praiſe in the iſlands.

Men cannot add any thing to the eſſential glory of Jehovah, which, being infinite and eternal, admits not of diminution or increaſe. All that they are required to do, is to acknowledge and declare this glory; to own his ſovereign dominion, authority, and grace; to endeavour to ſerve and pleaſe him by the duties of gratitude and obedience; and to give him the honour due to his name. Of all the duties which men owe to their Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer, this is the moſt comprehenſive. It is that which is moſt worthy of God, and becoming the creature; it forms a neceſſary ingredient in all the exerciſes of devotion,

* Chap. xxv. 24.

devotion, and mixes even with the actions of common life. It is the very life and ſoul of praiſe and thankſgiving, which always ſuppoſe the full conviction that God is really ſuch as he hath manifeſted himſelf to mankind, in his works, and in the riches of his ſovereign grace, and that his benefits have deeply impreſſed the heart with love and gratitude. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and ſtrength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; for his everlaſting mercy and free favour in giving light to you when ſitting in darkneſs, and in bringing you forth from the priſon into glorious liberty. Eſpecially are you, the inhabitants of this highly favoured iſland, called upon to give thanks to the Lord God, for the ineſtimable bleſſings you enjoy through the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

13 The LORD ſhall go forth as a mighty man, he ſhall ſtir up jealouſy like a man of war: he ſhall cry; yea, roar: he ſhall prevail againſt his enemies.

Another argument intimately connected with thoſe already mentioned, is here ſuggeſted, to excite the Gentiles to unite in giving glory and praiſe to Jehovah. For many ages the Gentile nations had been detained in the bondage of corruption, in a ſtate of deplorable ignorance of the true God and his ſalvation. The Lord God, merciful and gracious, having ſet open the doors of the priſon wherein they were confined, and having granted them the light of the glorious goſpel, he was about to bring them into the felicity and liberty of his children. For this great unmerited benefit, they are juſtly required to praiſe Jehovah; who is introduced as an illuſtrious conqueror going forth againſt his adverſaries, poſſeſſed of invincible ſtrength and courage, to vanquiſh and wreſt from them the power which they had uſurped, and to reſcue his miſerable people from the tyranny and oppreſſion

oppreſſion under which they had long groaned. By this figure or manner of ſpeech, wherein the Moſt High is ſpoken of as a champion or warrior, he is often repreſented in the ſacred writings, both by prophets and poets *. There is great beauty and propriety in the alluſion, which exhibits Almighty God going forth like a hero, to deliver his choſen people from the power of their enemies; to inflict upon them righteous vengeance for the injuries done to his name, his honour, and kingdom; to vindicate his glory, of which he had been deprived by idolaters; and to reſcue the nations from ignorance, error, idolatry, and ſervitude, by means of the doctrine and Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt. This precious privilege ought to be celebrated with thankfulneſs and joy by all nations who participate in it, as the greateſt bleſſing they poſſeſs.

He ſhall ſtir up jealouſy, &c. Men renowned for military valour, when about to fight, were wont to go forth to battle inflamed with rage, on the recollection of the injuries they had received from their adverſaries, ſolicitous that nothing might tarniſh their honour, and expoſe them to reproach. Animated by this heroic ſpirit, they exerted all their powers in the combat. Something ſimilar to this is here attributed to Jehovah, who after having ſuffered the honour of his name to have been long obſcured, jealous for his own glory and the happineſs of his people, goes forth to ſubdue every adverſe power.—*He ſhall cry; yea, roar.* Theſe words intimate that the Lord God was to make ſome terrible noiſe, ſuch as is formed by the ſound of trumpets and other martial inſtruments, when ſoldiers engage in battle, or when conquerors have gained the victory over their enemies. You will find this matter nobly illuſtrated in the hiſtory of the war betwixt Abijah king of Judah, and Jeroboam at the head of the Iſraelites, recorded 2 Chron. xiii. 10. *et ſeq.* The expreſſions here uſed may intimate, that the Almighty, in diſplaying his glory by

* See Exod. xv. 3. Deut. xxxii. 41. Pſal. xxxv. 1. Zech. xiv. 3.

the overthrow of the empire of Satan, and the deſtruction of idolatry, was to employ thoſe means which were to aſtoniſh and confound his adverſaries: ſuch were the diſcourſes, the apologies, and confeſſions of his faithful ſervants and martyrs. They may farther denote, that the eſtabliſhment of the kingdom of Meſſiah in this world, was to be attended with great and awful commotions, the effects of divine wrath and vengeance, which were to be loudly publiſhed over all the earth; the fame whereof was to ſtrike terror into the ſupporters of ſuperſtition and idolatry. From the throne of God were to proceed thunderings, and lightenings; voices, and earthquakes, and terrible judgments; whereby men were to be inſtructed, that the Moſt High will dreadfully avenge his injured honour and intereſt.—'Be wiſe now, 'therefore, O ye kings; be inſtructed, ye judges of 'the earth: ſerve the Lord with fear, and rejoice 'with trembling *.' Let this counſel be acceptable to you alſo of low degree.

14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been ſtill, *and* refrained myſelf: *now* will I cry like a travailing woman; I will deſtroy and devour at once,

God declares by the Prophet, that when he would call the Gentiles to participate in the privileges of his kingdom, a remarkable change was to take place in the world: the œconomy of the church was to aſſume a new form; and a different order of things was to be eſtabliſhed. For a long period he had held his peace, whilſt the whole human race (the poſterity of Abraham excepted) diſperſed over the face of the earth, had corrupted his worſhip, and diſhonoured his divine majeſty. He had ſuffered all nations to walk in their own ways of ignorance, ſuperſtition, and idolatry, which they had deviſed, and wherein they delighted. The time of this ignorance God

* Pſal. ii. 10, 11.

God winked at; not that he approved or encouraged their ſin and folly, but highly diſpleaſed at their abſurd conduct, he took no notice of them: he left them to follow the imaginations of their own hearts; he gave them no direct revelation from heaven, nor ſent his ſervants to ſhew them the evil of their ways, and to reclaim them from error and wickedneſs. In this manner God refrained himſelf, and exerciſed much long-ſuffering toward thoſe who knew him not. —*Now will I cry*, &c. To ſtop the torrent of corruption and miſery, which had ſpread among all people, Jehovah was to break ſilence, and to burſt aſunder the reſtraint he had obſerved in times paſt: as a travailing woman whoſe hour is come can no longer refrain from crying aloud, ſo he was to lift up his voice in the miniſtry of the goſpel, and by the exertions of his mighty power and grace, multitudes were to be regenerated and brought into the ſpiritual world. The empire of Satan, wherein ſin had reigned unto death, was to be deſtroyed; and the kingdom of grace, in which righteouſneſs was to reign by Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life, was to be eſtabliſhed.—*I will deſtroy* (ſaith God) *and devour at once*. I will effectually vanquiſh all oppoſition that comes in the way, to obſtruct the execution of this purpoſe, and conſume ſuddenly thoſe who endeavour to counteract the deſigns of my providence and grace. A fire ſhall devour before me, and it ſhall be very tempeſtuous round about.

15 I will make waſte mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers iſlands, and I will dry up the pools.

Thoſe who refer this prediction to Cyrus, that mighty man of war, who with his victorious army conquered the great city Babylon, conſider the words in their obvious literal ſenſe. To this application of the prophecy I cannot accede; becauſe the events here

here foretold are repreſented as ſources of joy to all the Gentile nations, even the moſt remote. Now what ground of exultation and praiſe, to the inhabitants of ſome great nations, was the deliverance of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, and their return to the land of Canaan? Nor do I ſee how this expoſition conſiſts with what immediately precedes and follows, or harmonizes with the general ſtrain of this part of our Prophet's diſcourſe. I therefore proceed to explain the words in the figurative ſenſe.

They deſcribe ſome great and wonderful work which God was about to execute by his power and vengeance, in reference to the Gentiles, who are eſpecially intended in the preceding verſes. In the prophetic ſtyle, mountains and hills denote empires and kingdoms, with their capital cities *. This expreſſion, then, may import, that God would lay deſolate thoſe great and powerful nations, that obſtruct the intereſts of the goſpel of Chriſt, and the advancement of his kingdom and glory.—By the like analogy, the herbs produced by theſe mountains may ſignify, whatever by their means was made to grow and flouriſh; ſuch as idolatry and ſuperſtition, with the temples and groves conſecrated to the ſervice of idols. Theſe were to be dried up, and in great meaſure conſumed, by thoſe calamities that proceeded from inflamed divine vengeance.—Rivers may denote either the means employed for conveying information reſpecting idolatrous rites and ceremonies, or the difficulties and obſtacles that lay in the way of the execution of the divine purpoſe. Theſe were to be converted into iſlands, their channels were to be dried up and quite altered, and every hinderance effectually removed.—The pools may repreſent the collective bodies of men, which were intended to teach the people ſuperſtitious rites and idolatrous practices, whereby they were preſerved from abandoning their old cuſtoms. Theſe were to be entirely deprived of their former power and influence. The predictions, conſidered

* See Jer. li. 25.

conſidered in their figurative ſenſe, plainly intimate, that whatſoever was connected with Pagan inſtitutions and rites, ſhall be altogether aboliſhed by the ſpecial interpoſition of Providence, in many of thoſe ſtates that were moſt adverſe to the kingdom of God. No oppoſition, however formidable, no combination, however ſtrong, no obſtacles, though apparently unſurmountable, can ever prevent the execution of the counſels of the Lord God Omnipotent, who declares in the next verſe,

16 And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: I will make darkneſs light before them, and crooked things ſtraight. Theſe things will I do unto them, and not forſake them.

In conſiſtency with the expoſition given of the preceding verſes, I conſider theſe promiſes chiefly in reference to the diſciples of the Son of God, ſaved from among Jews and Gentiles, who are journeying toward a city of habitation.—The perſons to whom theſe gracious aſſurances are given are blind. This deſignation may with propriety be applied to them, inaſmuch as they were once deſtitute of ſpiritual diſcernment, until reſtored to the enjoyment of that ineſtimable bleſſing by the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. The man who was cured of his natural blindneſs by Jeſus Chriſt was called the blind man even after his eyes were opened *. In like manner, thoſe who have had the eyes of their underſtandings enlightened may ſtill retain the name of blind, which is deſcriptive of their former condition.—Or the people ſpoken of may be denominated blind, becauſe their ſpiritual ſight is weak; they ſee but in part and through a glaſs darkly; they ſee not afar off; and have juſt cauſe to lament their remaining ignorance of divine objects. They do not clearly perceive the deſigns

* See John ix. 17.

deſigns of divine providence in his various diſpenſations toward the world and the church. They are aſtoniſhed at the means which God hath employed, to accompliſh the ends that his infinite wiſdom hath purpoſed to execute. They do not ſee as they ought the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin, the corruption of human nature, its oppoſition to the law and goſpel of God; nor do they diſcern as they wiſh, the import and excellence of divine truths, ſo as to have a tranſforming view of their beauty and utility.—To perſons of this character God ſaith,

I will bring them by a way that they knew not, &c. Theſe expreſſions ſeem to be of ſimilar import, the latter ſerving to illuſtrate and confirm the former. The way that they knew not may comprehend all the various means whereby the Moſt High conducts his people through this world, and preſerves them to his eternal kingdom. They are ſuch as could not have been deviſed by mortals, and very different indeed from thoſe pointed out by carnal wiſdom. By this way, he brings them from a ſtate of ſpiritual bondage and captivity into glorious liberty, and carries them progreſſively forward to the poſſeſſion of the heavenly inheritance, the better country, the reſt that remaineth for the people of God. In the exerciſe of genuine repentance, of faith in his word and providence, of ſelf-denial, mortification of ſin, of true devotion, unreſerved obedience and ſubmiſſion, he leads them on through ſnares, difficulties, and trials, to the land of everlaſting uprightneſs. To this way they were entire ſtrangers, until God was graciouſly pleaſed to bring them into it, and make them go in the way of his precepts. Like Iſrael in the wilderneſs, they wandered in a ſolitary way, inattentive to the bleſſings they received from God, and their infinite obligations to him; they queſtioned his power, veracity, and loving kindneſs; they tranſgreſſed his commandments, and murmured at his diſpenſations. From this dangerous ſtate, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, leads them in paths they have not known,

known, wherewith in times paſt they were totally unacquainted. And even after he hath brought them into the paths of righteouſneſs for his name's ſake, were they deſtitute of a guide, their condition would be truly deplorable, and their ruin unavoidable: unleſs he lead them in his truth, and preſerve them amid the unforſeen difficulties and oppoſitions thro' which they have to paſs, they muſt fall a prey to their enemies.

I will make darkneſs light, &c. What a delightful change is here foretold! The ignorance, unbelief, and error; the afflictions and ſorrows whereby the people of God were diſtreſſed and annoyed, and which hindered them from contemplating divine objects in their native beauty, ſhall be diſpelled, according to this prediction. Thoſe things which ſeemed myſterious and obſcure ſhall be rendered clear and perſpicuous; thoſe which appeared perplexing and dubious ſhall become plain and evident; thoſe events which were calamitous and painful ſhall be exchanged for them that are proſperous and ſucceſsful; and thoſe which excited fear and diſmay ſhall aſſume a pleaſant and joyful aſpect. God will mercifully remove every thing compriſed under the name of darkneſs, in which they had been involved; and cauſe the light of divine knowledge, holineſs, and comfort to ſpring up, ſo that they ſhall be advanced to proſperity, happineſs, and joy. Their gifts and graces ſhall gradually increaſe; their holineſs and good works ſhall ſhine more and more unto the perfect day.—*And crooked things ſtraight.* Thoſe vicious practices which were moſt inconſiſtent with the rule of God's word, ſhall be rectified or laid aſide; and thoſe things that were moſt adverſe to the happineſs and the intereſt of the objects of his love and care, ſhall receive a new direction. Every impediment that hindered their progreſs in the ways of truth and righteouſneſs ſhall be taken away in due time: even thoſe violent perſecutions which threatened the ruin of the church, ſhall conduce to their benefit, by purifying

purifying them from corruption, and diſtinguiſhing them from hypocritical profeſſors; whilſt the conſtancy and zeal of confeſſors of the truth, ſhall prove the means of propagating the goſpel of Chriſt.—*Theſe things will I do unto them*, &c. The Lord God who is faithful and true, pledges his veracity for the accompliſhment of the precious promiſes we have been conſidering, and aſſures his ſervants, that they ſhall be fulfilled in ſuch a manner as to demonſtrate his power and preſence. Though the benefits he hath promiſed to confer are ineſtimable, and thoſe on whom they are to be beſtowed are altogether unworthy of them; yet they may firmly rely on the faithfulneſs of Jehovah, that they ſhall be enjoyed in due ſeaſon; for, ſaith God—*I will not forſake them.* This comfortable aſſurance, which is often repeated, is plain and explicit, and ought never to be called in queſtion. His loving kindneſs he will not utterly take from them, nor leave them in any caſe; and therefore they may depend on his omnipotence and grace being at all times exerted in their behalf.—Such are the important bleſſings wherewith God hath declared he will enrich his church: in them we ought to be ſolicitous to ſhare. Be ſtrong then in faith, giving glory to God; fully perſuaded, that what he hath promiſed he will perform.

17 They ſhall be turned back, they ſhall be greatly aſhamed, that truſt in graven images, that ſay to the molten images, Ye *are* our gods.

Diſgrace and confuſion ſhall be the certain portion of idolaters. People of this deſcription perceiving the wonderful progreſs of the goſpel, and the awful judgments inflicted upon the enemies of the ſervants of God, aſhamed and confounded at their own folly, were to deſiſt from their abſurd practices. Similar expreſſions with thoſe now before us, frequently occur in the Pſalms of David. 'All they ſhall be

'confounded,

'confounded (ſaith the royal poet), that ſerve graven 'images, that boaſt themſelves of idols *.' The words of our Prophet plainly intimate, that thoſe who had been addicted to idolatry, conſcious of their vain and criminal practices, were to renounce, with ſhame and regret, the ſervice of thoſe images which they had acknowledged as their gods. Senſible that they could not hear their requeſts, that they were incapable of working any deliverance, or of conferring any benefit, they were no longer to do them homage. They were no more to ſay to the work of their hands, ye are our gods; but with juſt diſdain, to adopt the language of Ephraim, 'What have I to do any more 'with idols †.'—This prediction hath been verified in many remarkable inſtances. God grant it may alſo be fulfilled in you, who have loved and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever—That, aſhamed of your vain confidence, you may turn from dead idols to ſerve the living God.

18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may ſee.

In theſe words, our Prophet addreſſes the Jewiſh people, who are repreſented as in a very miſerable ſtate, demanding from them diligent attention to what he was about to deliver. Having foretold the future illumination and converſion of the Gentiles, and the deſtruction of idolatry; he takes occaſion to ſhew his countrymen their obdurate inſenſibility, with reſpect to religious matters, and their criminal propenſity to the ſervice of idols, notwithſtanding the many warnings they had received, and the peculiar advantages they enjoyed. To this very important intereſting ſubject, he calls them to apply their minds. Ye who have hitherto lent a deaf ear to the admonitions, reproofs, and counſels given you by the ſervants of Jehovah, and who by unprovoked rebellion againſt his authority, have expoſed yourſelves to the terrible judgments of Heaven. Hear,

* Pſ. cvii. 7. † Hoſ. xiv. 8.

O my people, and I will teſtify unto you; incline your ear to the words of my mouth. Hearken diligently to what I have in command from God to tell you, and to foretel, ſhall certainly come to paſs. Take heed what you hear, and how you hear; aware that there is as much danger in hearing in an improper manner, as there is benefit and comfort in hearing aright: Ye who have been blind to your beſt intereſts, and who have never ſeen the excellence and utility of the inſtructions, you have received from the prophets of the Lord: Ye who have been deaf, neither perceiving, pondering, nor obeying the directions and warnings that have been given you—Open your ears to hear, and your eyes to contemplate the momentous information I am about to communicate for your conſideration. Plead not your inability to comply with this requiſition, and thus endeavour to excuſe your diſobedience. Be aſſured that this is your preſent indiſpenſible duty, and if attentively performed, may prove the means, through the divine bleſſing, of bringing you both to hear and ſee as you ought.—The ſame demand is made upon you, brethren, to which you ought to yield prompt obedience. Hear then, the voice of the Son of God, and you ſhall live; behold his glory, and you ſhall be ſaved.

19 Who *is* blind, but my ſervant? or deaf, as my meſſenger *that* I ſent? who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect, and blind as the LORD's ſervant?

The deſcription given of the deplorable ſtate of the Jewiſh nation, is amplified and confirmed; thoſe of them excepted, who were illuminated and taught of God. As doubts might have ariſen reſpecting the perſons who are called deaf and blind, Iſaiah ſhews more particularly who are intended. The poſterity of Iſrael were honoured with the appellation of God's ſervant. They were inſtructed by Jehovah, in matters relative

relative to his ſervice; his work was their chief employment; their whole buſineſs conſiſted in executing his commands, and to him they were directed to look for ſafety and recompenſe. They were alſo his ſervants or miniſters, whoſe office conſiſted in executing his pleaſure, and in acquainting the nations with the will and worſhip of the true God, that they might call them off from their vain ſuperſtitions and idolatrous practices; to ſerve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jeſus who delivers from the wrath to come. Hence they are thus addreſſed, chap. lxi. 6. Ye ſhall be named the prieſts of the Lord; men ſhall call you the miniſters of our God.—The blindneſs and deafneſs with which they are charged, does not relate to their external ſenſes, but to the internal operations of their minds; wherein they were ſo deficient, that they had become incapable of perceiving and underſtanding ſpiritual objects. How ſevere the reproof here adminiſtered! The ſervant, the meſſenger of the Lord of hoſts, who would rightly perform his duty, ought to be ſharp ſighted, and poſſeſſed of a clear underſtanding; that he may properly diſcriminate the things that are excellent, and form a juſt eſtimate of their worth. Such, however, was the then preſent ſtate of the men of Judah; and ſuch was to be their future condition, that abſorbed in groſs ignorance and errors, and blinded by prejudices and carnal affections; they would not attend to their duty, their intereſt, and danger; nor hearken to the ſalutary inſtructions that were given them by providential diſpenſations, and the prophets of the Moſt High. Such was their incredulity and inſenſibility, their profanity and contempt of the word of God, that they would not underſtand, believe, and obey divine truths. In conſequence whereof, they formed miſtaken, perverſe apprehenſions reſpecting their ſpiritual ſtate, the righteouſneſs, and the kingdom of Meſſiah.

Who is blind as he that is perfect, &c. The poſterity of Iſrael might be called perfect, in reference to

to their original ſacred and civil conſtitution, which was eſtabliſhed by Jehovah himſelf, maintained by the moſt excellent laws, and protected by the peculiar care of God's providence. The beauty, the glory, and perfection of the Jewiſh church and ſtate were truly admirable. The Lord their God was pleaſed to cover their natural deformity, to waſh them from pollution, to anoint them with oil, to clothe them with broidered work, to gird them with fine linen, to cover them with ſilk, and to deck them with ornaments. He endowed them with external, and ſome of them alſo with internal comelineſs. He gave them his ſtatutes, his ordinances, his judgments, and his good Spirit: He erected his temple and worſhip among them, ſo that their beauty was perfect of its kind, as deſcribed by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xvi. 8—14. Notwithſtanding theſe diſtinguiſhing advantages, they are repeatedly charged with extreme ſpiritual blindneſs. This character was remarkably applicable to them at the period preceding the Babyloniſh captivity; about the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the appearance of the Son of God in this world.

20 Seeing many things, but thou obſerveſt not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.

Theſe words explain the nature of that blindneſs and deafneſs whereby the Jewiſh people are characteriſed. Though endowed with the faculties of reaſon and underſtanding, they did not trace the effects which they ſaw, to the cauſes whereby they were produced; nor did they deduce proper conſequences from thoſe things which came under their view. They heard the word of God, and the meſſages ſent to them by his ſervants, and though they poſſeſſed the powers of perception and intelligence, yet their ſerious attention was not engaged; they did not conſider the deſign of what they ſaw and heard, nor were they thereby diſpoſed to the exerciſes of faith, obedience, and

and gratitude. They did not improve their natural faculties for the beſt purpoſes; they did not ſet a juſt value on the miracles that were wrought for them, nor on the means of ſalvation wherewith they were favoured; they did not turn from their evil ways and doings, but went on frowardly in their treſpaſſes. They did not advert to the deſigns which the calamities and deliverances they experienced were intended to accompliſh, nor did they obſerve the diſplays of the righteouſneſs, power, and grace of God, in the diſpenſations of providence wherewith they were viſited. On theſe and other accounts, they juſtly merited the character before us, which was firſt given them by Moſes*, and afterward by Iſaiah and the other prophets†.—Their conduct is thus farther delineated—*Opening the ears, but he heareth not.* They heard the ſound of the words ſpoken to them by the ſervants of God, but they did not underſtand their import; they did not conſider and lay them to heart. Having eyes, they ſaw not; and ears, they heard not, ſo as to believe and be ſaved. In theſe, and other reſpects, did the Jewiſh people afford a ſtriking repreſentation of the church under the New Teſtament, eſpecially in thoſe times wherein the miniſtry of the word is not accompanied with the enlightening, purifying influence of the Holy Spirit.—In them, brethren, we behold a living image of ourſelves. How many remarkable interpoſitions of providence have we witneſſed? how many admonitions and directions have we received? yet, alas, the deſcription here given of the Jews, may juſtly be applied to us. How awful the threatening denounced againſt thoſe who regard not the works of the Lord, and the operation of his hands; 'the Lord ſhall deſtroy them, and 'not build them up‡.' Let us then attentively hearken to Moſes and the prophets, to Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, who ſpeak to us the word of God, to which we ought to yield reverence, faith, and obedience.

21 The

* Deut. xxix. 2. *et ſeq.* † Jer. v. 21. Ezek. xii. 2.
‡ Pſal. xxviii. 5.

21 The LORD is well pleaſed for his righteouſneſs' ſake; he will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable.

Notwithſtanding the degenerate poſterity of Iſrael contemned the word of God, and turned away their ears from hearing the law, Jehovah manifeſted his high complacency in it, and by peculiar marks of reſpect, hath magnified his word above all his name. —The Lord is well pleaſed, he graciouſly regards, he mercifully accepts, and uniformly teſtifies his good will toward his people, whom he foreknew, and will not caſt off. He not only gives ſtriking proofs of his dread diſpleaſure at the wicked, by the terrible judgments which he executes; but he exhibits the moſt grateful evidences of his clemency and benevolence. God takes no pleaſure in the death and deſtruction of thoſe, who refuſe to attend to the diſcoveries he hath given of his will, who pour contempt on the means of ſalvation he hath appointed, and who, regardleſs of the honour of his government and grace, perſiſt in their tranſgreſſions. On the contrary, he is pleaſed with their penitent return to him, with their thankful acceptance of his mercy, and their dutiful ſubjection to his authority. In this manner, the Lord is well pleaſed, *for his righteouſneſs' ſake*, on account of his tender mercy, his everlaſting faithfulneſs, and conſummate equity; which ought to be highly admired, and celebrated as the ſource of all his goodneſs to the ſons of men. In this ſenſe of the word, the expreſſion imports, that God, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of his grace, embraced in his favour and love, the Jewiſh people, and compaſſionately regarded them, not on account of their own merits and worthineſs; but for the honour of his own veracity and equity, diſplayed in the fulfilment of the promiſes made unto the fathers, for whom God demonſtrated the moſt tender affection. Or the righteouſneſs here meant, may be the righteouſneſs brought

in

in by the Son of God, manifeſted in the fleſh, according to divine appointment, which is ſometimes called in ſcripture, the righteouſneſs of God. Thus we read, Rom. x. 3. 'That Iſrael being ignorant of 'God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh 'their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God.' For the ſake of this righteouſneſs God is well pleaſed, and ſhews the moſt benevolent affection toward his people, in whom he fulfils all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and a work of faith with power.

He will magnify the law, &c. The Lord God magnified the law he delivered to his church, by the grandeur and magnificence diſplayed at its promulgation from Mount Sinai, where he exhibited his majeſty and glory in ſuch an awful manner, as tended to conciliate reverence and honour for his ſupreme authority. Such was the ſplendor and ſolemnity with which the delivery of it was accompanied, that the apoſtle of the Gentiles ſays, 'The miniſtration 'thereof was glorious*.'—Beſides the Son of God, in human nature, magnified and made it honourable, by his perfect obedience, even unto death. Being a member of the Jewiſh church, he put high reſpect upon the ceremonial law then in force, by ſubmitting to its rites and ordinances; and upon the judicial law, by obeying its political injunctions. The moral law he magnified, by removing the falſe gloſſes affixed to its ſeveral parts, by giving its true interpretation, and by yielding complete obedience to all its precepts. It is the honour of ſubjects to ſubmit to the good laws framed for their benefit; but the law of God was honoured by the great Lord of all, who fulfilled its extenſive demands in the moſt trying circumſtances.—He alſo made it honourable by ſuſtaining the awful penalty denounced againſt tranſgreſſion. Though he never at any time violated one of its commands, he endured the curſe threatened againſt diſobedience; though the moſt illuſtrious perſon

* 2 Cor. iii. 7.

ſon in the univerſe, the puniſhment due to the tranſgreſſion of the law, which men had incurred, was inflicted upon him. To all this I add, that the law of God was magnified by the full accompliſhment of the promiſes made to obedience, and the glorious rewards he received for his ſubjection to its demands. Among theſe may be reckoned his reſurrection from the dead, his high elevation to the right hand of God, his univerſal dominion, and the ſalvation of his church. All the honours conferred upon him, redound to the honour of the law to which he was pleaſed to ſubmit. In this manner we explain the expreſſions in this verſe, whereby our Prophet aimed to convince his fellow citizens of their blindneſs, and the excellency of the law of God.—Theſe conſiderations ought to inſpire us with veneration and reſpect for its ſacred authority; and with gratitude to him for his wonderful condeſcenſion in retrieving the honour of the divine law, which we had preſumptuouſly violated. They ſhould alſo excite us to place entire dependence on his perfect obedience unto death, by whom the law is thus magnified, and to be ſolicitous that having it written on our hearts, by the Spirit of the living God, we may endeavour, through the whole of life, by our obedience, to teſtify the high reſpect we entertain for its divine author. Give me underſtanding, O Lord, and I ſhall keep thy law, yea, I ſhall obſerve it with my whole heart.

22 But this *is* a people robbed and ſpoiled; *they are* all of them ſnared in holes, and they are hid in priſon houſes: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a ſpoil, and none ſaith, Reſtore.

The deplorable ſtate of the Jewiſh nation at the time wherein this prophecy was delivered, and in ſucceeding periods, is here graphically deſcribed. Under the reign of Ahaz, they were reduced to this miſerable condition by the Syrians, the Ephraimites, and

and other nations; as appears from the hiſtory recorded, 2 Chron. xxviii. 5. *et ſeq.* Their ſituation became ſtill more calamitous at that memorable æra wherein they were led captive to Babylon, when the predictions before us received a farther accompliſhment. They had their completion at the dreadful period in which wrath came upon them to the uttermoſt, for their contempt of the perſon and doctrine of the Meſſiah; then their city, temple, and nation, were deſtroyed by the Romans. Iſaiah ſaw with his eyes the former of theſe afflictive events; to the two latter he looked forward by the Spirit of prophecy. In theſe ſeaſons of diſtreſs, the inhabitants of Judea were robbed and deprived of their liberties and poſſeſſions, they were ſpoiled and bereaved of their glory and treaſures. The awful divine judgments, the invaſions of their country, and the perſecutions which they ſuffered, obliged them to hide themſelves from the fury of their enemies, and to ſeek for ſhelter in holes, in pits, and in caves of the earth. Great numbers of them alſo, having been ſeized by their oppreſſors, were cloſely confined in priſons. Others were plundered of their moſt valuable effects, and became a prey to their relentleſs foes; whilſt there were none who had ſufficient courage and ability, to oblige them to reſtore what had been unjuſtly and violently taken away.—Be thankful, that through the mercy of God, we are not in ſimilar circumſtances with thoſe here deſcribed; and that we enjoy unmoleſted, our liberty, property, and religious privileges. Let us endeavour faithfully to improve theſe advantages to his honour who conferred them.

23 Who among you will give ear to this? *who* will hearken, and hear for the time to come?

Having been repeatedly admoniſhed of the procuring cauſe of the evils wherewith you are now oppreſſed, which threaten your future deſtruction;

who among you will be ſo wiſe as liſten with eager attention, as diligently to conſider, and lay to heart this intereſting ſubject. Our Prophet did not now addreſs the upright and faithful of his countrymen, who doubtleſs were ever ready to receive inſtruction. He directs his diſcourſe chiefly to the hypocritical and diſobedient, who having been hardened by divine judgments, were averſe to admit conviction of their ſin and danger.—They neither were affected by the calamities which they felt, nor feared thoſe which were threatened. Of ſuch people the Jewiſh nation were moſtly compoſed, at the time wherein this diſcourſe was delivered, and of them Iſaiah enquired, Who among you will give ear? &c.—Inattention to the judgments of the Almighty, and the meſſages delivered by his ſervants, hath not been confined to the period wherein he exerciſed his miniſtry; but hath diſcovered its pernicious influence in every age of the church, accompanied with many evils reſulting from this criminal temper. Spiritual blindneſs, inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart, have generally been ſucceeded by fatal indifference and ſecurity.—Who then among you, brethren, will give ear, hearken, and hear for the time to come? Jeſus Chriſt repreſents, in the parable of the ſower, three of the four claſſes of hearers of the word of God, as unprofitable; and therefore every one ought to take heed that he give a becoming reception to ſacred truths. Though thoſe who are planted by the rivers of waters, be a great multitude, like the trees of an immenſe foreſt, yet good fruitful hearers, I am afraid, are ſo few, that a child may write them. Innumerable obſtacles from without, and from within, combine to obſtruct attention to the operations of Providence, and the word of God. Who then among you are determined, through divine aſſiſtance, for the future to ſurmount every difficulty, that you may liſten with careful attention to the voice of God, in his diſpenſations, and in his goſpel? To you that hear, ſhall more be given, more knowledge, more grace,

grace, holineſs, and comfort; but from you that hear not, ſhall be taken away the inſtructions you have deſpiſed: your light ſhall be turned into obſcurity, your hope into deſpair, and deprived of the means and Spirit of life, you ſhall lie down in ſorrow.

24 Who gave Jacob for a ſpoil, and Iſrael to the robbers? did not the LORD, he againſt whom we have ſinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

Theſe words point out the author, and the procuring cauſes of the calamities which befel the men of Judah and Iſrael. Their public diſtreſſes did not proceed from fate or fortune, but from the ſupreme Lord of the univerſe, who as the juſt puniſhment of their atrocious wickedneſs, delivered them into the hands of thoſe, who ſpoiled and deprived them of their poſſeſſions. Their moſt powerful adverſaries could not have treated them in this cruel manner, had not he who rules in the kingdoms of men, given them as a prey to the oppreſſive power of their enemies. Though the various events, proſperous and adverſe, that happen to the people of God, are brought about by the intervention of means and inſtruments; yet the hand of the Almighty, which ought never to be overlooked, but humbly acknowledged, is in all theſe things. Iſrael no doubt might have blamed their enemies for their rapacity, cruelty, and injuſtice; but they ought to have conſidered, that the Moſt High over all the earth, permitted and employed them to take away their glory, that he might ſeverely correct them for their ſins.—To God, the Governor among the nations, the all-wiſe diſpoſer of perſons and events, whom we have offended, let us look up and acknowledge as the author of every affliction. He doth according to his pleaſure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; he is holy in all his ways, and juſt in all his works.

works. He caſt down the throne of Babylon, he took away the crown of Perſia, he deprived Greece of its power, and Rome of its empire: he gave Jacob for a ſpoil; and if we hearken not to the voice of his word and providence, we may juſtly dread, that ſimilar ſins may bring on ſimilar judgments.

Did not the Lord, he againſt whom we have ſinned? Sin againſt God, the tranſgreſſion of his laws, is the ſource of all the direful calamities with which mankind are viſited. This affecting truth, which is generally known, and often confeſſed, does not here require proofs and illuſtrations. The poſterity of Jacob, who were peculiarly indebted to God, above all the people on the face of the earth, proudly refuſed to walk in the ways of holineſs and righteouſneſs, which he had pointed out in his word, and by his ſervants. They would not obey the holy precepts he had given them, to guide their feet in the paths of peace, but became perverſe and diſobedient, and ſo fell under the weight of divine judgments. As they would not be reſtrained from atrocious ſins, by the authority and threatenings of Jehovah, nor be conſtrained to yield obedience to his commands by the promiſes he gave them; they were made to know, and ſee, that it is an evil and bitter thing, to forſake the Lord their God. By many awful judgments in the wilderneſs, and afterward in the land given them for a poſſeſſion, they were often bereaved of their moſt valuable enjoyments. Their contempt of the word of God, and the tranſgreſſion of his laws, brought upon them the moſt terrible calamities, as their hiſtory abundantly teſtifies.

25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the ſtrength of battle; and it hath ſet him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid *it* not to heart.

On account of the obſtinate diſobedience, and groſs inſenſibility

inſenſibility of the Jewiſh people, the Lord God threatens to inflict upon them the moſt awful judgments, which are ſet forth under the well known emblems of fire, and of battle. The expreſſions before us, which I ſtay not particularly to illuſtrate, are exceedingly forcible, and well adapted to rouſe thoſe to whom they were directed, from the ſtate of lethargic ſtupidity in which they were involved. Of all the natural cauſes which ſerve to awaken men from unconcern and inſenſibility, there are none more alarming, than being incompaſſed with fire and flames; none more dreadful than the fury of God's anger; none more terrible than cruel ſlaughter, devaſtation, and ruin, which are the ſtrength of battle. Notwithſtanding theſe direful calamities, every where invironed the infatuated poſterity of Iſrael; though they were threatened to be inflicted, and afterward executed with awful ſeverity; they did not conſider the cauſes from which they proceeded, they did not lay to heart the juſt diſpleaſure of Jehovah, to which their ſins had expoſed them. They ſtubbornly perſiſted in tranſgreſſion and impenitence, until they periſhed amidſt the terrible judgments of heaven. The Ephraimites, ſurrounded with the flames of war, kindled by the wrath of God, were conſumed; 'becauſe they turned not to him that ſmote them, 'neither did they ſeek the Lord of hoſts *.' In the days of Ahaz the men of Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and turned away from him. Wherefore as king Hezekiah acknowledged 'the wrath of 'the Lord came upon them, and he delivered them to 'trouble, to aſtoniſhment, and to hiſſing.' The prediction we have been conſidering, was farther verified in the time of Zedekiah, when God ſent a fire into Judah, and conſumed the palaces of Jeruſalem; and received its completion by the devaſtation brought upon that people by the Romans.—Let us reverence the admonitions that are given in the word of God, and ſtand in awe of the judgments inflicted by the providence

* Chap. ix. 11, 12, 13. † 2 Chron. xxix. 8.

providence of God, which render thoſe things matters of ſenſe, that in the threatenings were objects of faith. Whilſt we obſerve in them the diſplays of his righteouſneſs, let us apply them to ourſelves, and beware of uncharitably cenſuring other people, and of endeavouring to juſtify or extenuate our own iniquities. Let us take heed that we ſin not after the ſimilitude of their tranſgreſſions, who have become objects of divine vengeance; and let us give unto the Lord the glory due to his name, for his mercy and patience exerciſed toward us. 'Not unto us, 'O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name we give 'glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's ſake *.'

* Pſalm cxv. 1.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE chapter now before us contains another ſection of the beautifully variegated diſcourſe, the former part of which is recorded in the preceding one. Our Prophet, having endeavoured by different means, to reach conviction of ſin and danger to the corrupt part of the Jewiſh nation, and having placed fully in their view, their criminal contempt of the word of God, their horrid inſenſibility, and the dreadful judgments, which theſe and their other iniquities would certainly bring down upon their guilty heads —He addreſſes the upright, the better ſort of the people, and comforts them with the reviving aſſurance of the divine preſence and ſupport, under the preſſure of public calamities, whereby the nation was to be overthrown; and under the trials and perſecutions, to which they themſelves might be expoſed. He alſo opens to them the pleaſing proſpect of the future eſtabliſhment and increaſe of the church, to ariſe from the vaſt number both of Jews and Gentiles who, by effectual vocation, were to be brought into their communion, ver. 1—7.—He then proceeds to confirm the eternal Godhead of Jehovah, the Holy One of Iſrael, by arguments fetched from two illuſtrious events, clearly predicted by his ſervants the prophets, which the true God, and he only, could accompliſh: namely, the deliverance of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, by means of Cyrus; and the converſion of the heathen nations to the faith and obedience of Meſſiah, v. 8—21.—Leſt the impenitent and perfidious of the Jewiſh people, might be elated with ſuch promiſes, Iſaiah adminiſters to them a new reproof; informing them that theſe important benefits were to be entirely aſcribed to divine mercy and grace, and not to the merits of a nation who were in general profane hardened ſinners; whoſe ſpecious worſhip and ſervices were far from being acceptable to God, v. 22—28.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIII.

BUT now, thus ſaith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Iſrael, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.

A general propoſition, big with conſolation to the church of God, forms a beautiful exordium to the portion of the very animating diſcourſe to which it is prefixed. To conciliate the greater reverence and attention from the afflicted and dejected, to whom he intended to adminiſter comfort; our Prophet introduces Jehovah, in whoſe name he ſpake, particularly addreſſing people of this deſcription. He begins by reminding them of the intimate connection that ſubſiſted betwixt him and them; a circumſtance which ought to have excited the higheſt veneration of his divine excellencies, and to have claimed unlimited confidence in the wiſdom and equity of his diſpenſations.—*But now, thus ſaith the Lord that created thee*, &c. God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and of all their inhabitants; and in this ſenſe he created the people who are here diſtinguiſhed by the names of Jacob and Iſrael. Having brought them forth from Egypt, and entered into covenant with them; he formed them into a people, and ſo adjuſted their external œconomy, that every part of it exhibited a type or ſhadow of good things which were then to come. This formation was common to the whole body of the Iſraelites, which included both the literal and ſpiritual poſterity of Jacob. The choſen, called, and faithful among them were his workmanſhip, created again in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works. This new creation is conſtituted of them who are Iſraelites indeed, in whom there is no guile; who are Iſraelites inwardly, whoſe

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circumciſion is of the heart, in the ſpirit and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men but of God. They were not all Iſrael who were of Iſrael. The literal Iſrael comprehended among them the myſtical Iſrael, who were after the ſpirit, to whom the promiſes of grace peculiarly belong. In this ſenſe, as well as the others, the words under conſideration may be underſtood; and from the frequent uſe of the expreſſion in this diſcourſe *, I am diſpoſed to think, that if this is not its principal meaning in the paſſage before us, it muſt be included. By this expoſition, the diſcourſe acquires greater propriety and force, and becomes more extenſively intereſting, than if limited to the natural poſterity of the patriarch Jacob. We ſhall therefore conſider this pathetic oration as directed, not only to thoſe who deſcended from this highly favoured perſon; but to his ſpiritual children, who, amid all the viciſſitudes of life, maintain ſupreme regard for God, patience in adverſity, perſevering importunity in fervent prayer, and conſtant dependence on the Almighty. Since Jehovah is their Creator, and former in their ſpiritual capacity, who, by his divine power, hath renovated them after his image, and created them anew, to ſhew forth his praiſe; they are his ſpecial property and workmanſhip, of which he will certainly take care, and effectually ſecure from the evils whereby they are intimidated.—To ſuch ſaith the Lord,

Fear not. Be not diſmayed, my choſen, beloved people, on hearing the ſharp reproofs and awful threatenings directed againſt the hypocritical and profane among you. Though their execution on the wicked and ungodly, exhibit a dark and melancholy ſcene, that may greatly depreſs your minds, fear not any of thoſe things that you may be called either to perform or to ſuffer. Be not afraid of the difficulties you may have to encounter, nor of the enemies with whom you may have to contend; greater is he that is in you, and with you, than all that are or can be

* Ver. 7, 15, 21. and chap. xliv. 1.

againſt you. Maintain upon your minds at all times a reverential awe of the majeſty of God, and vigilant ſolicitude, leſt you fall into temptation and ſin, and ſo incur his dread diſpleaſure: but do not give way to anxious timidity on any account, and, like the workers of iniquity, be in great fear where there is no juſt ground of fear.

For I have redeemed thee; or, as the Hebrew words denote, *I am thy Redeemer.* I delivered thy renowned progenitor, Jacob, out of all adverſity, as he himſelf thankfully acknowledged; I reſcued his natural poſterity, who were called by his name, from the hard bondage wherein they were detained in the land of Egypt; and, according to my promiſe, I will deliver them from captivity at Babylon. And all his ſpiritual children, who are Iſraelites indeed, I will redeem from the miſeries in which they are involved, and to which they are obnoxious, and confer upon them the moſt ſubſtantial benefits.—*I have called thee by thy name.* The patriarch Jacob God ſirnamed Iſrael; to his children in following ages he was pleaſed to give the name of their great anceſtor; and by this appellation they were commonly diſtinguiſhed from other nations. His choſen peculiar people in every generation he calls by name; intimating the accurate knowledge that he hath of every circumſtance relative to their condition, the ſpecial favour that he bears to them, and their particular deſignation to the privileges and ſervices he aſſigns them.—*Thou art mine.* Thou art my ſervant, my ſon, my inheritance; thou art mine by creation, preſervation, and redemption; by thy own free choice and voluntary ſurrender; by all the ties of duty, and gratitude, which ought to engage thee to glorify my name, and to obey my authority. Since in every view that thou canſt take thou art my unqueſtionable property, thou mayeſt be aſſured that I will take care of thee and all thy intereſts. This conſideration ought to baniſh from thy mind every uneaſy apprehenſion, every deſponding fear. By

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theſe powerful arguments doth Jehovah enforce the exhortation directed to his peculiar people, *fear not*. —Attend to them, my hearers; why ſhould you fear, whom God hath redeemed? He who is above all, can eaſily and ſeaſonably ſecure you againſt all the evils that you moſt dread: he can prevent or remove every thing that you are ſolicitous to eſcape, or render them conducive to your real benefit.

2 When thou paſſeſt through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhall not be burnt; neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee.

Comfortable aſſurance is here given to the church compoſed of the ſpiritual poſterity of Jacob, that amidſt all the afflictions and calamities which ſeem to threaten their deſtruction, they ſhall be preſerved and delivered. This reviving truth, which is repeatedly inculcated in ſcripture *, expreſſes the determined purpoſe of Jehovah, who hath declared, that he ſhall always have a church in this world, which he will defend and ſupport by the care of his providence, ſo that they ſhall certainly triumph over all the adverſities with which they are inviroued. The words before us, however, which give explicit aſſurance of the ſafety and perpetuity of the church, muſt not be applied, without ſome reſtrictions, to every individual in the myſtical Iſrael. Indeed there can be no reaſonable doubt, that God who is faithful, will preſerve all his choſen people, under the afflictions and perſecutions through which they have to paſs, and finally conduct them to a ſtate of undiſturbed tranquillity and felicity.—Let us inveſtigate more particularly the promiſes contained in this verſe, which require to be underſtood, not in the literal, but in

* See Pſal. cxxi. 7, 8. Mat. xvi. 18.

in the figurative ſenſe of the words.—The evils and diſtreſſes whereby the peculiar people of God are afflicted, are repreſented under two different figures; namely, by waters and rivers; which may emphatically denote, external troubles and calamities that come with irreſiſtible force, excite general perplexity and conſternation, and expoſe to imminent danger.—And by fire and flames, which, if they ſignify any thing different from the former expreſſion, may be intended internal ſpiritual diſtreſſes, that give riſe to great anguiſh of mind, and ſerve to try and refine the righteous, whilſt they conſume the wicked, who are as droſs.

To paſs through the waters and the fire, which of all elements are the moſt injurious to man, is to ſuſtain thoſe alarming afflictions which threaten immediate ruin. The metaphor ſeems to be taken from the perilous condition of one, who is every where ſurrounded with water or flames of fire, through which he is obliged to paſs in conſulting his own ſafety. In like manner the faithful ſervants of God are ſometimes encompaſſed with adverſities of various kinds, and beſet with manifold tribulations, before they attain the accompliſhment of the promiſes. Hence the church is introduced celebrating the praiſes of God, on account of the deliverances he had wrought for them, in theſe emphatical words, 'We went thro' 'fire and water, (through troubles of oppoſite natures, 'though alike dangerous and deſtructive) but thou 'broughteſt us out into a wealthy place *.' And when aſcribing to God the glory of their ſalvation, they acknowledge that 'had not the Lord been on 'their ſide, the waters had overwhelmed them, the 'proud waters had gone over their ſoul †. Aſtoniſhed at the perils from which they had been extricated, they compare the fury and violence of their adverſaries, to raging fire and overwhelming floods, from whence they were wonderfully reſcued. In this ſenſe the people of God, whilſt ſojourning in this preſent

* Pſal. lxvi. 12. † Pſal. cxxiv.

ſent evil world, are often obliged to paſs through waters and rivers, through fire and flames; to endure painful inward and outward diſtreſſes.—In theſe calamitous circumſtances, how reviving the promiſe of the omnipotent and faithful Jehovah!

I will be with thee, &c. at all times, and in all places; for I will never leave nor forſake thee. I will give thee pleaſing ſatisfying proofs of my gracious refreſhing preſence with thee, and of my tender care of thee; I will not take my loving kindneſs from thee nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail. I will be with thee in trouble, to ſtrengthen and uphold, to comfort and deliver thee, and to conduct thee ſafely thro' all troubles and dangers to the land of uprightneſs. I will not enlarge; having opened the import of this promiſe, when diſcourſing from chap. xli. 10. Obſerve the happy conſequences of its fulfilment—*The rivers ſhall not overflow thee—thou ſhalt not be burnt.* By the ſeaſonable interpoſition of my providence, and the powerful influence of my Spirit, thou ſhalt be kept from ſuſtaining any real hurt by the afflictions thou mayeſt ſuffer. On the contrary, they ſhall prove the ſalutary means of purifying thee from ſin; and having accompliſhed this purpoſe, thou ſhalt be delivered.—What memorable inſtances are recorded in ſcripture, of the truth I have been illuſtrating! The Iſraelites paſſed through the Red Sea and the river Jordan in ſafety and triumph, under the conduct and protection of Jehovah. The three men of whom we read in the book of Daniel, who were caſt into the fiery furnace, walked in ſafety through the midſt of the flames, and were wonderfully preſerved and delivered by the power of God. Such aſtoniſhing proofs of the preſence of God with his people, ſuch amazing interpoſitions in their favour, whereby the promiſes we have been conſidering were literally verified, ought to confirm our faith and hope, of their fulfilment in ſome meaſure to all the true Iſrael of God.

3 For

3 For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Iſrael, thy Saviour; I gave Egypt *for* thy ranſom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

A ſolemn confirmation of the precious promiſes, contained in the preceding verſe is here ſubjoined, and the church, diſtreſſed with various afflictions, are aſſured of God's kind affection.—*I am the Lord thy God.* With theſe words begins the preface to the ten commandments, which God delivered from mount Sinai to the children of Iſrael. They ſuggeſt ſome forcible arguments, which powerfully urge obedience to the divine authority. They are introduced by our Prophet for another purpoſe, to animate the redeemed of the Lord, to lay aſide diſmaying fears, and to rely on the faithful promiſes which God hath given them for their encouragement. For this end he reſumes the magnificent titles and endearing relations by which he often ſpeaks of himſelf to his people. I am the Lord, the ſovereign omnipotent proprietor and governor of the univerſe; and therefore I juſtly claim profound ſubjection to my commands, and unſuſpecting confidence in my promiſes.—Thy God, who hath choſen thee to be my peculiar people, and thou haſt avouched me to be thy God; ſo that my attributes, my providence, my word, and Spirit, ſhall render every diſpenſation conducive to your benefit and comfort—The Holy One of Iſrael, who am perfectly and unchangeably free from all manner of impurity, who have conſecrated and ſet apart Iſrael for my ſervice and glory, and who am honoured and ſanctified by the reſpect and obedience ſhewn by them to my worſhip and authority—Thy Saviour, who of old reſcued thy fathers with a ſtrong hand and ſtretched out arm, from cruel bondage in Egypt, from the ſea's devouring deeps, from perils in the wilderneſs, and from the hands of their powerful enemies.—And thy Saviour, who art an Iſraelite indeed, who in great love hath delivered thee from an enormous load of guilt, and

and the dominion of thy ſpiritual foes, that thou mayeſt ſerve me in holineſs and righteouſneſs.

I gave Egypt for thy ranſom, &c. In theſe and many other inſtances, is verified the proverb which ſaith, 'the wicked ſhall be a ranſom for the righteous, and the tranſgreſſor for the upright *.' To accompliſh the deliverance of Iſrael from the oppreſſion of Egypt, the Lord puniſhed the latter that he might preſerve the former. To reſcue his peculiar people from the miſeries wherein they were involved, and to open a way for their eſcape, Pharaoh and all his hoſts, were drowned in the Red Sea. Such was the immenſe price paid for their redemption from bondage. And in latter times, when Senacherib was juſt ready to fall upon Jeruſalem, ſoon after entering Judea, he was providentially diverted from the execution of that deſign; and turned his arms againſt the Egyptians, and their allies, the Cuſhean Arabians, with their neighbours the Sabeans. And Salmanezer, after he had deſtroyed the kingdom of Samaria, was alſo prevented by divine providence from overthrowing that of Judah, by carrying on war againſt the nations which are here mentioned. When Zerah king of Ethiopia came up againſt Judah, with a thouſand thouſand men, the Lord ſmote the Ethiopians who were entirely overthrown. Theſe and other events of a ſimilar kind, to which our Prophet may refer, remain very obſcure for want of the light of hiſtory, that in regard to theſe times is very deficient. Certain it is, that the Governor among the nations, was graciouſly pleaſed to avert from Judea the terrible calamities that threatened that country, by turning the arms of their enemies againſt other kingdoms, particularly thoſe ſpecified in this verſe.—What a high value doth God ſet upon his church, what a tender affection doth he bear to them, and what a ſolicitous concern doth he manifeſt for their ſafety and proſperity: for their ſakes, he hath not only ſacrificed great and populous nations,

* Prov. xxi. 18.

nations, but delivered up his own Son to be their ranſom from ſpiritual thraldom and bondage!

4 Since thou waſt precious in my ſight, thou haſt been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

Another ſpecial privilege is here promiſed to the ſpiritual Iſrael of God, expreſſive of his peculiar gracious regard for them. Ever ſince the ſupreme Lord and Ruler of the univerſe, appropriated to himſelf a choſen people, he hath exalted them to honour, he hath conferred upon them diſtinguiſhing marks of his favour, and rendered them reſpectable and happy above all the kingdoms of the world. They had been in times paſt what he afterward promiſed they ſhould be in time to come; a name of joy, a praiſe, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which ſhall hear all the good that he doth unto them *.' After manifold glorious interpoſitions in their behalf, he conducted them into the glory of all lands, where he fed them with the fineſt of the wheat, and gave them abundance of the moſt excellent proviſions of every kind. He honoured them with his ſacred oracles, his ordinances, and preſence; he fixed his reſidence among them, and admitted them to converſe with him, ſo that they were a people near unto him in all that they called upon him for. Theſe noble prerogatives, with many others, which the upright among them enjoyed, rendered them more reſpectable than thoſe around them. —*And I have loved thee.* The truth of this declaration is abundantly evident from many paſſages of ſcripture, indeed from the whole hiſtory of Iſrael. When Iſrael, ſaith God, by the prophet Hoſea, was a child, then I loved him, and called my ſon out of Egypt. The Lord thy God, ſaid Moſes, hath choſen thee to be his ſpecial people above all the people that are

* Jer. xxxiii. 9.

are on the face of the earth. And becauſe he loved them, he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and the houſe of bondage; he gave them a rich inheritance; he ſet Solomon to be king over them; and honoured them in the ſight of the nations. Time would fail to enumerate the many inſtances of God's tender affection for this highly favoured people, among whom were the generation of the righteous, whom he loved with an everlaſting love; and with loving kindneſs having allured them to himſelf, he cheriſhed them with paternal care and affection. To ſuch, the words before us were peculiarly directed.

Therefore will I give men for thee, &c. It ſeems to me uncertain, whether theſe words are intended to expreſs what God had already done, or what he would afterward do for the objects of his affection; for the Hebrew word may be tranſlated with equal propriety, either I have given, or I will give. Viewing them in reference to events which were then already paſt, they may have a ſpecial reſpect to the overthrow of the nations, which God deſtroyed in order to ſecure the proſperity of his people; ſuch as the Egyptians, the inhabitants of Canaan, and the nations that haraſſed and made war againſt them. Conſidering them as relating to events which were then future, they may point at the terrible ſlaughter that was to be made in the Aſſyrian army by the angel of the Lord, which demonſtrated God's compaſſionate regard for the poſterity of Iſrael: they might look forward to the overthrow of the Chaldean empire, by the Medes and Perſians, in order to effect the deliverance of the Jews from captivity; an event often mentioned in the following prophecies: and to the ſimilar fate of the Syrians in after times, who had grievouſly diſtreſſed the inhabitants of Judah, and endeavoured to exterminate them from their poſſeſſions. By theſe and other remarkable interpoſitions of Providence in favour of the men of Iſrael, immenſe numbers of people were cut off for their ſakes, and the Lord God publicly teſtified that they

were precious in his ſight, that he honoured and loved them. By ſuch wonderful diſplays of gracious regard for them, and the awful judgments upon their enemies wherewith they were accompanied, thoſe who were Iſraelites indeed would be excited to the exerciſe of true repentance, of lively faith, and conſtant dependence upon God.—From this record of the loving kindneſs of the Lord, let us learn theſe uſeful leſſons which are often inculcated upon us.

5 Fear not, for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy ſeed from the eaſt, and gather thee from the weſt.

6 I will ſay to the north, Give up; and to the ſouth keep not back: bring my ſons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

Whilſt our Prophet, in the name of God, threatened the execution of the awful judgments predicted by Moſes, and the other ſervants of the Moſt High, upon the idolatrous, the impenitent, and hypocritical; he encourages the faithful with the pleaſing proſpect of the enlargement and increaſe of the church of God. He declares, that they were not only to be preſerved by the care of divine Providence in their diſperſions, but that they were to be collected from every quarter, and reſtored to their former happy ſtate and privileges. With this pleaſing object fully in view, he again diſſuades from anxious diſquieting fears, and enforces this caution by repeating the ſame argument he had uſed in the 41ſt chapter; namely, the divine preſence, aſſiſtance, and protection. To this he immediately adds,—*I will bring thy ſeed from the eaſt*; which may comprehend the deſarts of Arabia, Chaldea, Perſia, Medea, and the other countries that lay eaſtward from Canaan—And gather thee from the weſt; from Greece, Italy, Spain, and other kingdoms ſituated to the weſtward of Paleſtine—And I will ſay to the north; to Scythia, Germany, Gaul,

Gaul, and the other empires whoſe local ſituations are northward from Judea; *Give up*—And to the ſouth; to Egypt, to Lybia, Ethiopia, and the other regions that lie toward the ſouth of Judah, *Keep not back*. From all theſe extenſive countries, wherein his people were ſcattered, Jehovah promiſes to collect them; that they might be united in worſhipping and ſerving the God of their fathers, and in enjoying the valuable privileges wherewith he enriched them. To give certainty to this predicted event, the Lord God engages, that he himſelf, for whom nothing is impoſſible, would conduct and gather them out of theſe countries; that by the word of his power, he would give orders for their reſtoration, and not permit any obſtacle whatſoever to hinder or keep them back from executing his pleaſure. By his authoritative command, he would bring his ſons and daughters, the poſterity of Jacob whom he had admitted into this intimate relation, from far diſtant lands, and places the moſt remote from Canaan.

7 *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

Whilſt Iſaiah was predicting for the comfort of the godly, the collection of the church under the Old Teſtament from their diſperſions, and reſtoration from captivity at Babylon to their own land; his mind is elevated by the Spirit of prophecy, to a far more noble and grand ſubject, which henceforward ſeems chiefly to have attracted his attention. Return from Babylon is clearly foretold, and at the ſame time, is employed as an image to ſhadow out an event of a much more important nature; the gathering in of the elect among Jews and Gentiles from the four quarters of the earth to one fold, to one body; that as there is but one Lord, there may be one Spirit, one baptiſm, and one hope of their calling. This congregation of the faithful into the Meſſiah's kingdom

dom, which was the ſubject of many prophecies under the former diſpenſation, was predicted by Caiaphas the high prieſt of the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's death *. And Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, after having expreſſed his approbation of the Gentile Centurion's faith, explicitly declared, 'that many ſhall 'come from the eaſt and the weſt, and ſhall ſit 'down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the king-'dom of heaven.' In another place, ſpeaking of the laſt days, he hath theſe remarkable words, 'He will 'ſend his angels with a great ſound of a trumpet, 'and they ſhall gather together his elect from the four 'winds of heaven †.' To this collection, I ſuppoſe, the prophecy under conſideration ultimately refers; and in the words before us, the Prophet delineates the character of thoſe who are eſpecially the ſubjects of his prediction.

In the 6th verſe, the Lord God honours them with the deſignation of his ſons and daughters; becauſe having been adopted into his divine family, and born of God, they love and honour their heavenly Father, they are poſſeſſed of his Spirit, they reſemble him in his imitable excellencies, and are inveſted in the privileges of his children. Here every one of them is ſaid to be *called by his name.* The impreſſions made upon them of his wiſdom, power, goodneſs, and holineſs, are ſo clear and conſpicuous, that it may be eaſily known whoſe children they are, and to whoſe family they belong.—*For I have created him for my glory.* The work of God's grace, whereby men are renewed after his image, in knowledge, righteouſneſs, and true holineſs, is emphatically repreſented in ſcripture, as a new creation. By the word of his power, the new creature is formed, whoſe underſtanding is illuminated, whoſe will is renewed, and whoſe mind is adorned with faith and love, with meekneſs, patience, and other graces. Hence the apoſtle Paul affirms of Chriſtians, that we are his workmanſhip; created in Chriſt

* John xi. 51, 52. † Mat. xxiv. 31.

Chriſt Jeſus, unto good works *. And in the words before us, God diſcriminates thoſe whom he would gather into his church by this peculiar character. This glorious work, he executes for his glory, that he may exhibit a rich diſplay of his infinite excellencies; and that thoſe, who in this ſenſe are his workmanſhip, may ſhew forth his praiſe, and advance his honour in the world, by the holineſs and uſefulneſs of their lives.

I have formed him, &c. Theſe expreſſions taken in connection with the former one, make a beautiful climax, wherein the Prophet gradually riſes from one thing to another. Creation denotes the communication of exiſtence to a creature, by the omnipotence of Jehovah. Formation ſignifies the conveyance of an agreeable figure, and fine proportion of parts to the creature that is brought into being. Making imports the excellence and comelineſs produced, by impreſſions of the Creator's power and grace, wherewith his work is embelliſhed, who always perfects what he begins. God creates men when he gives exiſtence to their ſouls and bodies, the two conſtituent parts of human nature; he forms them when they are united, organized, and the whole frame is adjuſted; and he makes them when he adorns them with thoſe noble powers, whereby they are prepared for every good work, and furniſhed for the ſervices aſſigned them. The Almighty created the people of Iſrael, in their collective capacity, when he brought them out of Egypt with a ſtrong hand: he formed them by giving them laws from mount Sinai, whereby they were incorporated into one body: and he made them, when he eſtabliſhed their political, and eccleſiaſtical œconomy. The God of all grace creates his peculiar people, who are Iſraelites indeed, when by the mighty power of his Spirit accompanying his word, he renovates, invigorates, and ſanctifies all their faculties. He forms them by rectifying every internal diſorder, and by imparting to them thoſe

* Eph. ii. 10.

thoſe uſeful and ornamental qualifications which are ſuited to the ſtations they are to occupy in the church. And he makes them when he perfects that which concerns them; endows them with wiſdom, underſtanding, and the graces of his Spirit, and enables them to ſhine forth in the beauties of holineſs. To people of this deſcription are given the preceding precious promiſes.—If ſo much is requiſite to the conſtitution of the new creature, you ought diligently to endeavour to aſcertain your real ſpiritual ſtate. Be not deceived by imagining that this great extenſive change, of which Jehovah affirms he is the author, is unneceſſary to true happineſs; the peculiar tenet of men who know not the ſcriptures, and the power of God. And beware leſt on frivolous grounds, ſuch as freedom from groſs ſins, partial reformation, or the performance of the exterior of ſome religious duties, you conclude, that you have experienced this diſtinguiſhing mercy, this renewing of the Holy Ghoſt. Give the matter a fair, full, and repeated diſcuſſion as the word of God requires.

8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

This part of the diſcourſe is deſigned to eſtabliſh the people of God, in the firm belief of the above predicted events; and to convince the degenerate Jews, and idolatrous Gentiles, of their certain accompliſhment in due ſeaſon. Jehovah is ſtill introduced ſpeaking to his choſen people, to whom he was pleaſed to communicate the knowledge of his will; requiring them to bring forth the blind people, &c. By this deſcription is doubtleſs intended the profane, and hypocritical among the Jews, who ſaw with their bodily eyes the wonderful works of Divine Providence, wrought in favour of their nation; and who heard with their ears the noble diſcourſes delivered by the prophets, whom God raiſed up to inſtruct them, and to rehearſe the aſtoniſhing wonders he had done

done for their fathers. They were however greatly deficient in attention, conſideration, and ſpiritual underſtanding. Blinded by deluſive errors, hardened by fooliſh prejudices, they formed wrong ſentiments reſpecting God's diſpenſations; they did not deduce proper concluſions from them, nor were they thereby engaged to believe, and truſt in him. They made light of the promiſes given to their fathers, and obſtinately perſiſted in idolatry and ſuperſtition; and ſo juſtly deſerved the character that is here given them. The Lord God demands, that theſe blind people be brought forth, to attend to a full and candid diſcuſſion of the argument derived from the prophecies already fulfilled, and to be accompliſhed, whereby the divinity of the God of Iſrael is evinced, and men ought to be induced to acknowledge his eternal power and Godhead

9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be aſſembled: who among them can declare this, and ſhew us former things? let them bring forth their witneſſes, that they may be juſtified: or let them hear, and ſay, *It is* truth.

The Gentile nations, eſpecially their wiſe men, and thoſe who preſided among them in things ſacred, are likewiſe required to convene; that being convinced of the abſurdity of ſuperſtition and idolatry, by the arguments to be ſet before them, they might join their ſuffrage to the divinity of Jehovah. The proofs introduced for this purpoſe, are taken from the temporal deliverance of the Jewiſh people from captivity by means of Cyrus; the converſion of the Gentiles by the Meſſiah; the ſevere judgments to be executed upon the perfidious rebellious poſterity of Jacob; and the preſervation of the church, amidſt all the calamities whereby they were to be diſtreſſed. Theſe remarkable events had been clearly foretold

foretold by Iſaiah in the preceding prophecies. Theſe wonderful works could be performed by no other than the true God, nor could they have been predicted by any but his ſervants the prophets. Theſe arguments properly conſidered, afford indubitable proofs of the glory of the God of Jacob, and diſcriminate him from the idols, and deities to which blinded nations paid their homage.—In the verſe before us, the Lord God calls upon all nations diligently to attend to the proofs he was about to adduce of his exiſtence, and perfections; that their faith and hope might be eſtabliſhed on a firm baſis; whilſt he challenges all the votaries of idolatry, to produce any inſtance of wiſdom and power like thoſe which he had given, and was about to exhibit toward his peculiar people.—*Who among them can declare this, and ſhew us former things?* Who among the patrons of ſuperſtition (ſaith God) can declare the events that I have foretold, and bring us acquainted with things that have long ſince happened, the accounts of which are now loſt? Would you vindicate your pretenſions, take your choice either of giving accurate information of paſt tranſactions, concerning which hiſtory and tradition are ſilent; or of foretelling future things with their concomitant circumſtances. As the matter in agitation is of the utmoſt importance that your claims be admitted,—*Bring forth your witneſſes*, to atteſt the certainty of the facts that may be alledged, to confirm the truth of what you ſay, and to aſcertain the juſtice of the claim you make in behalf of your deities. You muſt produce ſufficient evidences, that thoſe who are conſidered by you as prophets, have indeed poſſeſſed diſtinct knowledge of the matters they are ſuppoſed to have predicted, and the circumſtances attending them; and they muſt be able to tell from what gods, and in what places, they received the revelations they pretended to communicate. This demand you cannot deny is reaſonable and juſt, and ought to be granted without heſitation.—*That they may be juſtified*, acquitted

quitted from every charge of impoſture and deceit, and acknowledged the true prophets of the true God. —*Or let them hear, and ſay, It is truth.* If you cannot comply with this requiſition, you ought to liſten with candour and patience, to the arguments adduced by the ſervants of the Lord God of Iſrael, in proof of his ſupreme divinity; and having attentively conſidered them, you ſhould frankly confeſs that what we affirm is truth, and worthy of undoubted credit. Thus candidly and openly doth Jehovah vouchſafe to deal with men, reſpecting his exiſtence and attributes, in the faith of which we ought to be firmly eſtabliſhed.

10 Ye *are* my witneſſes, ſaith the LORD, and my ſervant whom I have choſen; that ye may know and believe me, and underſtand that I *am* he: before me there was no god formed, neither ſhall there be after me.

Appeal is made to the people of all nations, who were required to aſſemble; that they might examine the evidences ſet before them, of the divinity of the God of Iſrael.—Ye, all of you without exception, are witneſſes of many ſtriking proofs of the glorious perfections of Jehovah, who hath not left himſelf without witneſs, in giving you rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling your hearts with food and gladneſs. Beſides, conſcience, that he hath placed as his vicegerent in every man's breaſt, which accuſes of the evil you commit, and approves of the good you perform, bears teſtimony, that verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth; and that to him you are amenable for your conduct.—*And my ſervant whom I have choſen*, &c. eſpecially you that I have appropriated to myſelf for a peculiar people, who are employed in my ſervice; you to whom this deſignation particularly belongs, can well atteſt the truth of my exiſtence, my perfections, providence, and promiſes; in conſequence of the many ſubſtantial proofs you have received, that I am God to whom there is

none like. The deſign of bringing forward theſe evidences is next ſpecified—*That ye may know*, &c. That you may be well acquainted, and thoroughly convinced of my eternal power and Godhead, that I am the Moſt High over all the earth, whoſe name alone is Jehovah—*That you may believe me*, and give undoubted credit to the revelations afforded you of my purpoſes reſpecting the world, and the church—*And underſtand that I am he*: And be convinced by demonſtrative arguments that I am he, who doeth all things according to the counſel of my will, for advancing the glory of my name, and the good of them that love me.—*Before me there was no god formed.* None to whom I owe my exiſtence and glory, being myſelf from everlaſting to everlaſting: none of the deities of whoſe antiquity you boaſt are equal to me, who am without beginning and without end —*Neither ſhall there be after me.* Theſe words denote the permanency, the immutability, and eternity of Jehovah, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever.

11 I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beſide me *there* is no ſaviour.

The God of Iſrael is introduced into the aſſembly compoſed of all nations, eſtabliſhing the truth of his divinity, that he might recal idolatrous heathens from ſuperſtition, and the worſhip of falſe gods; and that he might confirm the faith of his upright ſervants. For this purpoſe, he brings into view ſome of the wonderful works he had already done, and others which he had foretold he was about to accompliſh in times then future: chiefly referring to the great temporal deliverance, that he purpoſed to work for his people, by means of Cyrus king of Perſia. This remarkable event is illuſtrated by alluſions to their reſcue from the tyrannical power of Aſſyria, from the bondage of Egypt, and the oppreſſion of the Chaldeans, as images of the ſpiritual ſalvation that he

was

was to accompliſh for his church, by the Meſſiah in the fulneſs of time.' He enters on this ſubject by proclaiming his glorious name, and peculiar character, *I, even I, am the Lord*, who poſſeſs ſupreme eternal divinity, every divine excellency, immutable glory and felicity. To me alone it belongs to publiſh my own eſſential majeſty and grandeur: to men indebted to me for all they enjoy, it is not expedient to glory. It is the prerogative of God to ſpeak of his own honour and greatneſs: it is the duty of creatures to celebrate the praiſes of their Creator and Lord. Let every thing that hath breath praiſe the Lord.

And beſide me there is no Saviour. It is the diſtinguiſhing character and glory of God, that he is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of them that believe. He is the Saviour of the human race, inaſmuch as he mercifully preſerves them, bears with long ſuffering patience their evil manners, and doth not deſtroy them at once by terrible judgments; but on the contrary, loads them with benefits. In this character he acts eſpecially toward his church, on which he confers temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal ſalvation. By the temporal deliverances he works for them, he exhibits ſtriking demonſtrations of his wiſdom, power, and goodneſs; and inſtructive repreſentations of the 'ſalvation of his own Son.' The other deliverances he hath wrought were from temporal, but this from ſpiritual evils; ſuch as the bondage of coruption, and the puniſhment of ſin. They were communicated under the direction of Providence, by means of human interpoſition; this by the intervention of the Son of God, the author of eternal ſalvation. They are accompanied with temporary effects, which oft-times are very ſoon over; whereas this never fails to be attended with everlaſting joyful conſequences, glory, honour, and immortality. With great propriety, then, doth Jehovah declare, that beſide him there is no Saviour.—Deeply ſenſible of the danger and the miſery in which we are involved by tranſ-

greſſion,

greſſion, and thoroughly convinced of the truth here aſſerted, let us earneſtly requeſt, that God, the only all-ſufficient Saviour, would deliver us from everlaſting deſtruction, reconcile us unto himſelf, and reſcue us from the dominion of our ſpiritual foes; that we may live to his glory, and for ever celebrate his praiſes.

12 I have declared, and have ſaved, and I have ſhewed, when *there was* no ſtrange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my witneſſes, ſaith the LORD, that I *am* God.

Satisfying proof is here produced of the important truth announced in the verſe immediately preceding. —I have declared (ſaith God) and made known by the things that do appear, my eternal power and Godhead; ſo that they are without excuſe that when they knew me, they glorified me not as God. In early ages of the world, I publiſhed and ſpread abroad over the earth, the report of the eminent deliverances which in following periods, I effected with a ſtrong hand and ſtretched out arm. At the very time I had fixed and foretold, I brought forth my people Iſrael from the land of Egypt, and reſcued them from the powers that would have oppreſſed them. I have ſaved, according to my promiſe, and I have ſhewed and revealed to my ſervants the great deliverances that I would work for their poſterity, long before there was any ſtrange god among you; before you ſacrificed unto dæmons, to gods whom you knew not, to new gods whom your fathers feared not *. To the God of Iſrael, who foreſhewed and actually wrought the ſalvations referred to, ought they to be attributed; as no others beſide him had any way intimated their knowledge of them, and the circumſtances with which they were to be attended. To his devout worſhippers, therefore, to whom this diſcourſe is particularly directed, he appeals for the truth

* Deut. xxxii. 17.

truth of what he had ſaid.—*Ye are my witneſſes, ſaith the Lord, that I am God.* You can bear teſtimony to the glory of my name, the righteouſneſs of my government; to the operations of my providence, and the faithfulneſs of my promiſes. You can avouch that I am the avenger of the wrongs done to my people, and their glorious deliverer, in time of need; as you have heard, ſo have you ſeen, and by conſequence you are well qualified to atteſt that I am God, the Almighty Ruler of the univerſe.

13 Yea, before the day *was*, I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who ſhall let it?

The poſterity of Iſrael having been diſtinguiſhed by their religion from all the people of the earth, other nations might have objected to the novelty of their ſacred rites, as having commenced in the days of Moſes, by whom they were taught to worſhip Jehovah, their deliverer from thraldom and oppreſſion. To obviate every objection of this ſort, the Lord God declares his eternity and immutability; that his being is underived; that he exiſted before the commencement of time; and that none can reſiſt his power, or counteract his operations—*Before the day was, I am he.* Before the ordinances of day and night were appointed, before time had begun to run its courſe, before the heavens and the earth were formed, and the mountains were ſettled, when there were no fountains abounding with water, I am he who was, who is, and who is to come, the Almighty, the everlaſting God the Lord.—*And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.* The power of the creatures is derived and limited; whereas my power is infinite, and cannot be controlled. All power in heaven and on earth belongeth unto me; I am clothed with ſtrength, wherewith I have girded myſelf. I can ſave and deſtroy, and there are none that can hinder the execution of my purpoſes; my arm is full of power; my right

right hand is great in might; none ever hardened himſelf againſt me and proſpered.—*I will work and who ſhall let it?* I will work when, and where, and in what manner I pleaſe; and will do whatſoever ſeemeth good in my ſight. I will build up and pull down, and do all my pleaſure. None have right to ſay unto me, What doeſt thou? nor can any fruſtrate the execution of my deſigns. There is no might or counſel againſt the Lord.—Theſe glorious prerogatives claimed by the bleſſed God, ought to ſtrike terror into the wicked, againſt whom he hath denounced the moſt awful judgments, from which there are none that can deliver. They ought alſo to animate the upright ſervants of God, amidſt all the afflictions with which they are viſited, with the pleaſing expectation of his ſeaſonable interpoſition in their behalf.

14 ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Iſrael, For your ſake I have ſent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whoſe cry *is* in the ſhips.

Theſe words announce the important benefit which God was about to confer upon the Jewiſh people, by bringing them back from captivity into their own land. The ſubject is introduced with great ſolemnity, and explicit aſſurance is given of the certainty of that event which was to exhibit an illuſtrious proof, that Jehovah is the Redeemer and Sanctifier of his church.—For your ſake, who are my peculiar people, who are precious in my ſight, who are called by my name, whom I have redeemed and created for my glory—To accompliſh your deliverance from exile, and to reſtore you to peace and happineſs, I have ſent the Medes and Perſians to fight againſt Babylon, and to lay waſte that great city—*And have brought down all their nobles*, &c. The Hebrew word tranſlated *nobles*, ſignifies alſo bars, as it is rendered

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on the margin of ſome bibles. Faithful nobles, and great men, elevated to important ſtations, are the ſtrength of a city or nation; when to the utmoſt of their power they prevent the encroachments of enemies, and the entrance of evils into the ſociety with which they are connected. Our Prophet foreſeeing, that, contrary to human expectation, Babylon was to be taken by Cyrus during the night, alludes to ſome remarkable circumſtances which doubtleſs occurred at that memorable period. The inhabitants diſtinguiſhed by their rank and opulence, and even the Chaldean ſoldiers, celebrated for valour and courage, ſtruck with conſternation, were amidſt the general confuſion, to flee with the utmoſt precipitation, down the ſtreets leading to the river Euphrates, which flowed through the midſt of the city; that in the ſmall veſſels and pleaſure boats that lay there they might eſcape the ravages of the enemy. To theſe barges, from whence the voice of joy and gladneſs was wont to reſound, they were to have recourſe for aſſiſtance in their flight from impending danger. Theſe few remarks may help you to underſtand this verſe, on which I apprehend it is unneceſſary to enlarge.

15 I *am* the LORD your Holy One, the Creator of Iſrael, your King.

To give certainty to the event above predicted; to lay open the ſource of hope and conſolation from whence the church was to derive eſtabliſhment; the Lord God reminds them of his character, and the intimate relations in which he ſtands connected with them—*I am the Lord*, the ſelf-exiſtent, omnipotent, and unchangeable Jehovah, who will verify all my promiſes and threatenings—*Your Holy One*, who poſſeſſes conſummate excellence and purity, who ſanctifies you, and who am ſanctified by you, who are my upright worſhippers, in whoſe ſalvation I will be glorified—*The Creator of Iſrael*, who, by the word of my power called you into exiſtence, who formed you into

into a people, and who will preſerve and deliver you —*Your King*, who rules you by your own conſent, who hath publiſhed the beſt laws for your obedience, who manages all your intereſts, who diſpenſes to you impartial juſtice, and who will defend you from all your enemies.—In this glorious and mighty Lord his people ought to place unſuſpecting confidence, and to depend on his power, and grace, and faithfulneſs, for every promiſed benefit.

16 Thus ſaith the Lord, who maketh a way in the ſea, and a path in the mighty waters;
17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horſe, the army and the power; They ſhall lie down together, they ſhall not riſe: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

Theſe words may be conſidered as a ſolemn confirmation of the preceding articles; or as a ſplendid introduction to the ſubſequent paragraph of this diſcourſe, which treats of another, a greater, and more glorious work of divine grace. Our Prophet ſeldom brings a meſſage from God to his people, that doth not either begin or conclude with ſome weighty argument, ſuited to impreſs the ſubject with greater energy on the minds of the hearers. A ſtriking inſtance of the truth of this remark lies now before us; whether the words be ſuppoſed to refer to what goes before, or to what immediately follows. The character claimed by Jehovah in this exordium hath an obvious alluſion to the great deliverance he wrought of old for his people, when he overthrew Pharaoh and all his hoſts in the midſt of the ſea. This memorable interpoſition in favour of the children of Iſrael is applied to many events which bear ſome reſemblance to it. Thus when God promiſes to his church liberty, ſecurity, and ſalvation, the emigration of the Iſraelites is brought into view; the dividing of the ſea, the deſtruction of the enemy, the

paſſage

paſſage through the deſert and the river Jordan, are ſo many magnificent objects which ariſe in the mind. —For that highly favoured people the Lord made a way in the ſea, as it is written, Exod. xiv. 21, 22. 'The Lord cauſed the ſea to go back by a ſtrong 'eaſt wind all the night, and made the ſea dry land, 'and the waters were divided, and the children of 'Iſrael went into the midſt of the ſea upon dry 'ground,' &c. Thus did the Almighty make a path in the great waters.

Who bringeth forth the chariot and horſe, &c. What is here affirmed perfectly accords with the hiſtory of the event, and the ſong to which it refers, where it is thus written: 'Pharaoh's chariots and his hoſt, 'hath he caſt into the ſea; his choſen captains alſo are 'drowned in the Red Sea*,' &c.—*They ſhall lie down together*, &c. Various expreſſions are uſed to repreſent the total overthrow of the Egyptians, and to diſplay the majeſty and power of God. Notwithſtanding their pride and inſolence, they cannot reſiſt the power of Jehovah, but ſink like lead to the bottom of the ocean.—*They are extinct*, &c. as a lamp whoſe oil is ſpent, and whoſe light is gone out—*They are quenched as tow*. Life is eaſily and quickly extinguiſhed, as the wick of a lamp that is made of tow, when dipped in water. Thus ſuddenly were the hoſts of Pharaoh drowned in the ſea. In this manner doth our Prophet contraſt the folly and impotence of men, with the wiſdom and omnipotence of Jehovah.—The aſtoniſhing wonders which God wrought for his people of old, ſuggeſt the ſtrongeſt encouragement to expect farther ſignal interpoſitions in behalf of his church. We may queſtion the ability of creatures to relieve, becauſe their power is circumſcribed; but Jehovah is Almighty. Though men be capable of communicating aſſiſtance, they may be deficient in wiſdom to embrace the moſt proper ſeaſon of exertion; but God is omniſcient. A

* Exod. xv. 4. ſee alſo chap. xiv. 17, 18.

friend may poſſeſs both ability and prudence, yet diſtance may effectually deprive of his aid; but the Moſt High is omnipreſent. Notwithſtanding man may be well qualified to impart all needful aſſiſtance, his kind intentions may be fruſtrated by unexpected diſſolution; but the Lord of heaven and earth, is the living eternal God. He who hath ability, wiſdom, friendſhip, and opportunity, may not have inclination to do us good; but Jehovah is merciful and gracious, and his compaſſions fail not. He knows our neceſſities, our inſufficiency, our danger, and miſery, and he ſtands engaged to interpoſe for our ſalvation.

18 ¶ Remember ye not the former things, neither conſider the things of old.

Another and ſtill more illuſtrious proof of the divinity of the God of Iſrael is here introduced, in order to eſtabliſh the faith and hope of his upright ſervants. The argument is derived from that wonderful work of omnipotence, the converſion of the Gentiles from dead idols, to the ſervice of the only living and true God. The former things alluded to, were, I ſuppoſe, the important temporal benefits conferred upon the church prior to the appearance of the Meſſiah; ſuch as the redemption of the Iſraelites from the power of the Egyptians, their introduction into the land of Canaan, their deliverance from the hands of thoſe who oppreſſed them in time of the Judges, and from the Aſſyrian army that afterward invaded Judea—Their return from captivity at Babylon, the deſtruction of the Chaldean empire, which had long been hoſtile to their intereſts, the overthrow of their perſecutors in after times, and the reſtoration of their civil and eccleſiaſtical ſtate, by means of the Maccabees. Theſe wonderful works of divine Providence, far from being of equal magnitude and importance, with that great event which our Prophet now brings forward, he would have the people of God to drop in ſome meaſure the contemplation of, that they

they might fix their attention on the more illuſtrious and aſtoniſhing works of divine power and grace. Such is the ſurpaſſing glory of the benefit he is going to mention, that all the former deliverances wrought in behalf of the church, were comparatively to be overlooked and forgotten; that they might view with the higheſt admiration the pleaſing object now to be exhibited. The mode of expreſſion here adopted, plainly intimates the ſuperior excellence of the ſubject he is about to treat, to thoſe comprehended under the name of former things. A remarkable inſtance of this ſort occurs in the prophecies of Jeremiah, chap. iii. 16. 'In thoſe days, ſaith the Lord, they ſhall 'ſay no more, the ark of the covenant of the Lord, 'neither ſhall it come to mind, neither ſhall they 'remember it, neither ſhall they viſit it, neither ſhall 'that be done any more.'—Why? becauſe a new covenant, and a more glorious deliverance was to be introduced, far tranſcending thoſe of former times.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it ſhall ſpring forth; ſhall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderneſs, *and* rivers in the deſert.

Admiring attention is demanded to the very momentous event, which is deſcribed in beautiful figurative language. In this paſſage, the reſemblance betwixt the deliverance of the poſterity of Iſrael from their Egyptian and Babylonian captivities, naturally preſents itſelf to the mind, as well as the ſpiritual deliverance to be wrought for the Gentiles by the mighty arm of Jehovah. The converſion of the heathen nations, from a deplorable into a happy ſtate, is emphatically repreſented as a new thing which had never before happened. The expreſſion leads our thoughts to that important benefit, which hath been conferred on the church under the New Teſtament, and intimates its ſuperior excellence to thoſe enjoyed under the former œconomy. The ancient prophets

prophets by this designation, pointed out the inestimable spiritual blessings to be enjoyed by the people of God under the gospel. Two instances of the truth of this remark may suffice at present. Jeremiah declared, 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah *.' Ezekiel promised, in the name of the Lord God, 'A new heart 'also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put 'within you,' &c. †. This characteristic distinguishes the œconomy of grace, wherein the apostle Paul says, 'All old things are passed away, and all things are 'become new ‡.' They are justly denominated new, because prior to the commencement of this dispensation they did not exist, and are now substituted in place of the former things which are abolished; and as in all respects they far surpass them, they ought to be viewed with pleasure and admiration—Of this new thing, the conversion of the Gentiles, it is affirmed,

Now it shall spring forth. The words must be understood according to the prophetic stile, in which things future, that seem to human view at a considerable distance, are spoken of as at hand; to intimate, that in the sight of God, a thousand years are as one day, that time is short, and quickly passes away, and that the predicted event shall certainly be fulfilled in its season. Notwithstanding several ages were to elapse before this prediction was to be accomplished, it was to spring forth like the corn that grows out of the earth, and gradually to advance towards its completion; when it was to become remarkably conspicuous, and highly grateful to those who on this account were to glorify the God of Israel.—*Shall ye not know it?* The upright among men, who diligently considered the ways of Providence, might perceive the approaching change of dispensations; and that from the period wherein the Jews returned from captivity to their own land, the way was

* Chap. xxxi. 31. † Chap. xxxvi. 26. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.

was opening for the manifeſtation of the kingdom of God. As preludes to its appearance, from that time not a few proſelytes were made to the Jewiſh religion from among the Babylonians, the Syrians, the Perſians, and Egyptians; by means of whom, God prepared the Gentile nations for the reception of the goſpel of Chriſt, whereby this great work was to be conſummated.

I will even make a way in the wilderneſs, &c. Thoſe who explain this prediction in its literal ſenſe, as referring to the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own land, conſider it as containing an explicit aſſurance, that a way would be opened for them to traverſe the deſert through which they had to paſs; and that they were to be favoured with a miraculous abundant ſupply of water for their refreſhment. Though it might have a primary reference to that event, yet to me, it appears a prophecy of the converſion of the Gentiles, which ought to be interpreted in the figurative ſenſe of the words. In this view, the expreſſion denotes, that God was not only to produce a new creation, to inſtitute a new œconomy, and to confer new privileges upon the church; but he was even to make a way for their reconciliation, effectual vocation, and complete redemption. To the Gentile nations, which on various accounts, as hath been already obſerved, reſembled a wild uncultivated country, God was to give a certain rule of faith and manners, by walking according to which, they were to attain communion with him and his people, to reach in due time the new Jeruſalem, and to poſſeſs the inheritance of the world. The Almighty was to make ample proviſion alſo for relieving their ſpiritual neceſſities, by conveying to them rich abundance of ſalutary truths, the graces of the Spirit, and divine conſolations, which are well adapted to ſolace the minds of men. In few words, by means of the doctrines contained in the goſpel of Chriſt, and the inſtructions delivered to them by the ſervants of God, in ſchools ſeminaries and churches, they were largely

largely to participate of thoſe ſpiritual benefits which impart refreſhment and ſatisfaction to the mind. In alluſion to the privileges and bleſſings wherewith God enriched the children of Iſrael, when wandering in the dry deſerts of Arabia, and journeying toward the inheritance promiſed to their fathers, our Prophet foretels, that the Gentiles were to be favoured with ſpiritual bleſſings correſponding to the advantages enjoyed by the poſterity of Jacob.—Grateful to the God of all grace for theſe predictions, let us depend on him to make his way plain before us, and to guide our ſteps in the paths of righteouſneſs. While paſſing through this dry and barren land, let us look to him for thoſe reviving comforts which are indiſpenſibly requiſite to gratify the longing deſires of travellers to the Zion that is above.

20 The beaſt of the field ſhall honour me, the dragons and the owls: becauſe I give waters in the wilderneſs, *and* rivers in the deſert, to give drink to my people, my choſen.

The happy conſequences are here mentioned that were to reſult from the accompliſhment of the prediction contained in the preceding verſe. I cannot think that the creatures deſtitute of intelligence, which are ſpecified in the words to be conſidered, were intended to be the ſubject of this prediction; but that they were introduced, ſymbolically to repreſent men in their natural ſtate, excluded from the communion of the church—reſiding in countries which enjoy not the benefit of ſacred inſtructions—who are ferocious and cruel—acting under the influence of unruly paſſions—and addicted to thoſe odious vices, which proceed from diſpoſitions analogous to the prevailing temper of the animals whoſe names are mentioned. In our progreſs through this ſacred book, I have had repeated occaſion to treat of the ſubject: at preſent I ſhall not add any thing

thing to what hath been ſaid *.—Dragons, which are wild, hurtful, and dangerous creatures, may ſignificantly denote, rude, barbarous, malicious people. —Owls, that cannot endure the light, that have a mournful voice, and live ſeparate from other birds, may repreſent thoſe to whom the light of truth is offenſive; who are at variance with the ſaints of the Moſt High, and utter things truly grievous and lamentable. People of theſe deſcriptions, God declares ſhall honour him—by believing in his exiſtence, perfections, word, and providence; by highly eſteeming his tranſcendent excellencies, his laws, his ordinances, and ſalvation; by giving him that grateful homage and chearful obedience which he juſtly demands, and, by delighting in him as their all-ſufficient friend and portion.—Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, the honour due unto his name. Let every one form the devout reſolution of the royal Pſalmiſt, 'I will ſpeak of the glorious ho-'nour of his majeſty, and of his wondrous works; 'I will ſpeak of the might of his terrible acts, and I 'will declare his greatneſs †.

Becauſe I give waters in the wilderneſs, &c. Theſe words aſſign the reaſon why men who once reſembled inferior animals, on account of their noxious diſpoſitions, ought to celebrate the praiſes of Jehovah. In his adorable providence and grace, he grants according to his promiſe, to the wilderneſs of the Gentile world, the truths and ordinances of the everlaſting goſpel, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit, which like waters are of a purifying, refreſhing, and fructifying nature.—*And rivers in the deſert.* Conſtant plentiful ſupplies of theſe precious bleſſings were to be every where diſperſed throughout the dry and barren regions inhabited by the Gentile nations.—*To give drink to my people.* The abundant communication of the ſpiritual benefits here foretold, were intended for the comfort of the peculiar people of God, whom

* See Chap. xi. 6. † Pſal. cxlv. 5, 6.

whom he had appropriated to himſelf as the objects of his diſtinguiſhing regard.—How merciful and gracious is God, who affords his highly favoured ſervants ſeaſonable rich ſupplies of the beſt bleſſings, even in circumſtances wherein they could be leaſt expected! He perfectly knows their wants, their fears, and dangers; he ſuits his mercies to their neceſſities, which he is ever ready to relieve. Let us, then, be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him from whom alone cometh our aid and ſalvation.

21 This people have I formed for myſelf; they ſhall ſhew forth my praiſe.

The peculiar people of God are here reminded of their infinite obligations to him, and the deſign of their formation. The devout among the Jews, with thoſe of other nations who were to be incorporated with them into one body, ſeem to have been the people intended in this expreſſion; whoſe character the apoſtle Peter thus elegantly deſcribes, 'Ye are a cho-'ſen generation, a royal prieſthood, a holy nation, a 'peculiar people, that ye ſhould ſhew forth the prai-'ſes of him who hath called you out of darkneſs in-'to his marvellous light *.' 'Who in time paſt (he adds) 'were not a people, but are now the people of 'God; which had not obtained mercy, but now 'have obtained mercy.' The Lord God formed their bodies and their ſpirits within them; he endowed them with various privileges, ſignificant of the glorious prerogatives he confers upon his church under the New Teſtament. By his word, accompanied with his Spirit, he conveyed unto them ſpiritual life; he ſubdued thoſe corrupt paſſions which would counteract obedience to his bleſſed will; he favoured them with the means of ſalvation, the felicity of his ſubjects, and the bleſſings contained in his promiſes; he diſpoſed them to the exerciſe of devout affections, and the performance of good works. The praiſe and glory

* 1 Peter ii. 9.

glory of this wonderful work he appropriates to himſelf, and excluſively claims as his due.—*They ſhall ſhew forth my praiſe*—by cordially believing the truths I have revealed, and the promiſes I have given; by firmly relying on my righteouſneſs, power and grace; by delighting in my ſalvation, and in the way of my commandments. Humbly ſenſible of their unworthineſs, they ſhall aſcribe to me the glory of all the mercies they enjoy; they ſhall depend upon me for every bleſſing that they need; and unreſervedly ſubmit to my diſpenſations, in this manner recommending my ſervice to all around them.—Such are the noble effects produced by the operation of the omnipotent grace of Jehovah, which Iſaiah, ſpeaking in his name brings forward, to demonſtrate his ſupreme divinity who is the God of Iſrael. What a ſtriking proof do they exhibit of this momentous truth! Were all the gods of the nations to unite, they could produce nothing of this ſort. Had miniſters of the goſpel not only the eloquence of men, but the tongue of angels, and faith that they could remove mountains; yet they could not poſſibly effect, by their own power and holineſs, any thing equal to what is deſcribed in this verſe.—Let us, then, ſhew forth the praiſes of God, who hath formed us for himſelf. Let us ſtudy to render his ways amiable in the eyes of men, by adorning his goſpel, by doing honour to our profeſſion, and making our light ſo ſhine before men, as to render the power of divine grace conſpicuous, and the excellency of religion admired.

22 But thou haſt not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou haſt been weary of me, O Iſrael.

The Jewiſh church was compoſed of two different claſſes of people of oppoſite characters. The greater part were profligate and wicked, who, though they ſubmitted to perform the exterior part of divine worſhip, did not ſerve God with integrity of heart.

The other part, who were upright before God, were greatly depreſſed with abounding iniquities, and the awful calamities to which the nation was thereby expoſed. Iſaiah, having comforted the laſt mentioned by promiſes and predictions of the precious benefits which God was about to confer upon his people, proceeds ſharply to reprove others of the community, remarkable for their criminal indifference in the worſhip of God; and informs them, that the bleſſings he had foretold were not to be beſtowed for their ſakes, who on account of their ſins deſerved dreadful judgments. They were the fruits, not of their merits, but of the rich mercy of God.—*But thou haſt not called upon me, O Jacob.* Calling upon God ſometimes in ſcripture denotes ſimply, the exerciſe of prayer; at other times it is uſed in a more extenſive ſenſe, to ſignify ſacred ſervices in general, eſpecially that invocation and confeſſion of his name which proceeds from the belief of his exiſtence, perfections, and providence, and is accompanied with good works. This worſhip was inſtituted by Jehovah, that his people might realize his preſence and attributes; that they might give unto him the glory due unto his name; and that preſenting themſelves before him they might adore his excellencies, call to remembrance his manifold mercies, and ſupplicate his enriching bleſſing.—It was appointed that they might expreſs in various ways their conſtant dependence upon God, and acknowledge him as the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, requiſite to ſupply their neceſſities—That their minds might be employed in the contemplation of his glory, and that they might form a practical acquaintance, with the way he hath opened for their acceſs to his infinite majeſty—That they might enjoy delightful intercourſe with him, whilſt he affords them pleaſing intimations of his loving kindneſs; and they pour out their hearts before him in penitential confeſſions, in grateful acknowledgments, and ardent deſires—That being relieved of their cares and ſorrows, they might become

become more afraid of offending him, better acquainted with their duty, and better prepared for the performance of it; and thus be trained up for ſerving him in his heavenly temple. For theſe and ſimilar important purpoſes hath the Lord God required his people, whom he hath formed for himſelf, to call upon his name.—How atrocious, then, the ſin with which Iſrael is here charged! It reſults from criminal infidelity reſpecting the providence and government of God; from groſs inſenſibility, ſecurity, and indifference to the ſubſtantial benefits which God hath encouraged his people to expect; and the want of a firm perſuaſion of his majeſty and mercy, who ſupplies the neceſſities of all that call upon him in truth. Such are the fatal ſources from whence originate the complaint before us.

May not this heavy charge be brought againſt ſome of you, my hearers? Are there any of you who reſtrain prayer before God? who do not enter into your cloſets, as our Saviour directs, and, having ſhut the door, pray to your Father who ſeeth in ſecret? Convinced in your conſciences that there is a God that judgeth in the earth, why do you neglect to converſe with the God of your life, and the Giver of all good, who can render you happy or miſerable for ever? Why do you ſlight your moſt valuable privilege, your greateſt honour, and beſt intereſt? Why perſiſt in the omiſſion of a plain commanded duty, the faithful performance of which might prove a ſource of true conſolation, and prevent thoſe painful ſtings of guilt and remorſe, to which contempt of God ſhall certainly give occaſion?—Are there any of you who neglect calling upon God in your families, notwithſtanding you are daily receiving fruits of the divine bounty, and new domeſtic comforts, deſtitute of which you ſhould be miſerable? What a pity that family religion, inculcated both by ſcripture precepts and examples, and eſſential to the happineſs of all under your roof, is excluded from your houſe! Hearken to the word of the Lord, delivered by the prophet

prophet Jeremiah, 'Thou wilt pour out thy fury up-
'on the heathen that know thee not, and upon the fa-
'milies that call not on thy name *.' Would you then eſcape this horrible tempeſt of divine wrath, which ſhall burſt forth with irreſiſtible violence, on thoſe ſocieties that refuſe to give unto the Lord the homage he demands; attend no longer to the ſpecious pretexts whereby you have excuſed yourſelves from this pleaſant ſervice, which is highly becoming thoſe who dwell together in unity. Are there any of you who ſeldom worſhip God in the public aſſemblies of his people? You well know that Jehovah hath graciouſly promiſed, that in all places where his name is recorded, 'I will come unto thee, and bleſs thee †:' And that he hath required that 'we forſake not the aſſem-
'bling of ourſelves together' in his houſe without ſufficient reaſon. Do you ſee nothing amiable in the courts of the Lord? Do you ſet no value on the power and preſence of God? Do you feel no pleaſure in the communion of ſaints? Do you want no bleſſing from God? You are ſenſible that the petitions of great numbers of people, uniting in the ſame requeſts; and the thankſgivings of many celebrating the ſame mercies, are more likely to be regarded, than the prayer of a ſolitary individual; and notwithſtanding, do you rarely appear in God's ſanctuary? Neglect then no longer, to come with the multitude that keep holy-day to the houſe of the Lord; that you may join with them in the voice of joy and praiſe, and receive the bleſſing, even righteouſneſs from the God of ſalvation.—Are there any of you who draw nigh to God with your mouths, whilſt your hearts are far from him? The complaint we have been conſidering may be brought againſt you, that was preferred againſt Iſrael, God is a Spirit; and ſeeketh ſuch to worſhip him as ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth. He holds no improving intercourſe with bodies whoſe minds go out after covetouſneſs. He muſt have ſpirits to converſe with, aſſimulated

* Chap. x. 25. † Exod. xx. 24.

aſſimulated into his reſemblance, employed with ardent affection, in doing him homage. The worſhip he demands and accepts, is ſpiritual performed with the ſpirit, and the underſtanding, through the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of all grace. It is the heart of the worſhipper that God chiefly regards; if that be not right with him, all external homage is only vain oblation, which cannot aſcend before him with acceptance. Be ſolicitous then, that you become 'the 'circumciſion, who worſhip God in the ſpirit, who 'rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and have no confidence in 'the fleſh.'—I hope that you will pardon this digreſſion. If I have deviated from the plan of theſe lectures, it is becauſe I am affectionately deſirous of your happineſs; and could not let ſlip the opportunity that preſented itſelf, of correcting ſome bad practices involved in the charge before us.

But thou haſt been weary of me, O Iſrael. Through their natural inconſtancy, and the prevalence of corrupt paſſions, they engaged with reluctance in the duties of divine worſhip, which they accounted grievous and burdenſome; they had become languid and remiſs in his ſervice, which they ought to have eſteemed holy, honourable, and a delight. Of the truth of this complaint ſome affecting inſtances are recorded in the prophecies of Amos and Malachi. In the days of the former prophet, ſuch was their language, probably expreſſed in a complaining tone, 'When will 'the new moon be gone, that we may ſell corn? and 'the Sabbath that we may ſet forth wheat'?* In the time of the latter, they diſcovered the ſame temper, when they ſaid of God's ſervice, 'Behold what a wea-'rineſs is it, and ye have ſnuffed at it, ſaith the Lord 'of hoſts †.' As if unacquainted with the honour, and happineſs reſulting from the worſhip of God, they had the effrontety to ſay, it is vain to ſerve God: what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, that we have walked mournfully, before the Lord of hoſts? Thus, under the influence of thoſe bad diſpoſitions,

* Chap. viii. 5. † Mal. i. 13.

poſitions, which induced them to prefer the gratifications of ſenſe, to the ſublime pleaſures and ineſtimable advantages, enjoyed in the ſervice of the Moſt High; they manifeſted criminal contempt of the favour and approbation of God; and ſhewed the baſeſt ingratitude for his exuberant goodneſs, and paternal care.—Diligently beware of this odious temper, which extends its pernicious influence not only to nominal profeſſors of religion, whoſe artificial motions depend on the cauſe that produced them, and which ceaſe with its operation—but to the people of God, when they become languid, and negligent in the performance of duty; when their love to God waxes cold, and the impreſſion of the excellence and importance of divine objects is infeebled, in conſequence whereof they grow weary in well doing. Endeavour then to be active, vigilant, and diligent, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.

23 Thou haſt not brought me the ſmall cattle of thy burnt-offerings; neither haſt thou honoured me with thy ſacrifices. I have not cauſed thee to ſerve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incenſe.

In this and the verſe immediately following, ſome inſtances are ſpecified, wherein Iſrael teſtified their wearineſs of God. Under the former diſpenſation, they were required, by divine appointment, to offer unto God two lambs of the firſt year without blemiſh, day by day, for a continual burnt-offering; and on the Sabbath-day, two lambs with flour and oil, in addition to the daily offering. In the beginning of every month, on the 14th day of the firſt month, on the day of preſenting the firſt fruits, and on the firſt day of the ſeventh month, they were commanded to offer in ſacrifice, rams, lambs, and other animals; that thereby they might do honour to their great Lord, ſhew their obedience to his authority, expreſs their gratitude to him for his goodneſs, their

their conſtant dependance on his providence, and their faith in the great ſacrifice to be offered by Meſſiah in the fulneſs of time. This homage God complains that they had ſhamefully neglected to pay him. They grudged to bring even their ſmall cattle for the ſacred purpoſes juſt now mentioned, and when they brought them, rather in compliance with cuſtom than in obedience to the divine command, they did not intend to put honour on God, and to ſerve him in the manner he required.—This crime was highly aggravated by the following circumſtance—*I have not cauſed thee to ſerve with an offering*, &c. The ſacrifices which God required from the children of Iſrael, though they were numerous, and frequently repeated, yet did not afford them juſt reaſons to complain of the ſervices aſſigned them. Notwithſtanding thoſe who were ill affected toward the worſhip of God, plainly ſhewed from time to time, that they conſidered his ſervice as troubleſome and grievous.—And ſtill, alas! there are within the precincts of the church, people who by their conduct diſcover this odious temper.

24 Thou haſt bought me no ſweet cane with money, neither haſt thou filled me with the fat of thy ſacrifices: but thou haſt made me to ſerve with thy ſins, thou haſt wearied me with thine iniquities.

The Moſt High had required the Iſraelites to bring ſpices alſo for the anointing oil, and ſweet incenſe to burn upon the golden altar before the ark of the teſtimony, as a ſymbolical repreſentation of the acceptable mediation of the great high prieſt of our profeſſion. This requiſition, though moderate and gracious in its deſign, was alſo neglected.—The ſweet cane or calamus, does not ſeem to have been the natural produce of the land of Canaan, but was brought to market by the merchants of Dan, and Javan,

Javan, and bought with money by the Jews *. In proof of their having been weary of God's ſervice, they did not purchaſe this article for the purpoſes, to which it ought by them to have been appropriated. —*Neither haſt thou filled me with thy fat*, &c. So inſenſible were they of their manifold obligations to God; ſo ungrateful for his benefits, ſo reluctant to perform the rites of divine worſhip, that they did not moiſten his altar, as they ought to have done, with the fat of ſacrifices, and oblations according to his appointment.

But thou haſt made me to ſerve, &c. By various ways they endeavoured to make God partner with them in their tranſgreſſions, to render his benefits and his inſtitutions ſubſervient to the gratification of their corrupt diſpoſitions, and thus laid him under the neceſſity of avenging their crimes. The contraſt ſtated betwixt the diſpenſations of God toward them, and their conduct toward him is remarkable, and claims attention. God did not afford them any reaſon of wearying in his ſervice; yet they wearied him by their iniquities. Notwithſtanding the many marvellous things which he did for them, it is written they ſinned ſtill the more. They converted the fruits of his bounty, and the ordinances of his inſtitution, into inſtruments of rebellion againſt his authority. When he proſpered them they forgat him; when he chaſtized them they murmured; when he loaded them with benefits they gave him cauſe to ſay, I am preſſed under you, as a cart is preſſed with ſheaves. —In the ſeveral articles of complaint here brought forward, God did not charge the Jewiſh people ſo much with the omiſſion of the rites of his worſhip, in performing which they were ſeldom deficient; as with their obſerving them in a manner whereby he was not honoured and pleaſed. Many of them conſidered the eſſence of religion to conſiſt in theſe carnal ordinances; whereas they were only temporary, and circumſtantial, and if not obſerved with faith in the

* See Ezek. xxvii. 19. † Amos ii. 13.

the manner enjoined; God declared, that they were deteſtable to him, and not available to any good purpoſe.*—Such were the charges which God preferred by our Prophet, not againſt all the people of Judah, for there were many upright ſervants of God among them; but againſt the greater part, who, eſpecially under the reign of Ahaz and Manaſſeh, were guilty of the ſins above mentioned.

25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.

In theſe words Jehovah ſolemnly declares, that the moſt important benefits which he confers upon his people, proceed not from their merits; but originate ſolely from his infinite mercy and tender compaſſion, who is the author and finiſher of ſalvation. To give the greater force and energy to the expreſſion, the words are repeated, in which the glorious prerogative is here affirmed, excluſively of all others to belong to the Lord: I, even I, am he who only blotteth out tranſgreſſions. Who can forgive ſins but God alone? He only that made the law which is violated, can pardon the tranſgreſſion; he only to whom the debt is owing can cancel the obligation; he only againſt whom the offence had been committed can remit the puniſhment. To grant the pardon of ſin, there muſt be united in him who beſtows it, perfect knowledge of the nature, the aggravations, and the deſert of ſin; power ſufficient to puniſh it as it deſerves, ſo that the exerciſe of this triumphant act of mercy, requires both omnipotence and omniſcience. Accordingly Jehovah hath appropriated to himſelf, the communication of this precious bleſſing. Of old he proclaimed his name, 'The Lord God mer-'ciful and gracious, long ſuffering, and abundant in 'goodneſs and truth; keeping mercy for thouſands, 'forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin,' &c. † If

* Jer. vii. 21. *et ſeq.* † Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

every creature operates by divine appointment according to its nature, he who eſtabliſhed that order, muſt delight in the exerciſe of that mercy which is eſſential to his character. Indeed he hath declared in the moſt ſolemn manner, that he hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live *. And to open the way for the honourable diſplay of his tender mercy, he trained up his church under the former œconomy, in the expectation of that great atonement, which in the fulneſs of time was to be made by Meſſiah; who was to become the propitiation for the ſins of the world; that God might be juſt as well as merciful, in giving the moſt illuſtrious proofs of his pardoning mercy.

I am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions, &c. The expreſſion is figurative, and may allude to the ancient practice of writing on a table covered with wax, which being ſmoothed, the writing was altered or cancelled at pleaſure—or to the method of diſcharging debts uſed by ſome people who blot them out, and draw lines through that part of the book wherein they were written—or to what is recorded, Numb. v. 23. where the prieſt under the law, was required to engroſs certain curſes in a book, which were to be expunged by the bitter water there mentioned. To which ever of theſe practices the expreſſion refers, it ſignificantly repreſents the benefit here intended; whereby ſin is ſo completely taken away, in virtue of the perfect obedience and atonement of Jeſus Chriſt, that it ſhall never more be laid to the charge of thoſe who are forgiven; all the curſes denounced againſt tranſgreſſion, being removed by the bitter ſufferings of the great Redeemer. This ineſtimable bleſſing, the Lord God ſaith he confers *for his own ſake*; that he may manifeſt the glory of his great name; that he may diſplay the amiable perfections of his nature; demonſtrate the equity as well as clemency of his government; put honour on the mediation of his Son; and have his praiſes celebrated throughout

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

throughout the church.—That the nature and extent of this privilege might be well underſtood, it is farther deſcribed in the laſt clauſe of this verſe. *And will not remember thy ſins*, I will not ſo call them to mind as to puniſh them, and inflict the calamities they deſerve; but having abſolved from guilt, and forgiven you all treſpaſſes, I will act toward you as fully acquitted from the charges formerly brought againſt you.—After the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, God was pleaſed to give them comfortable experience of the truth of this declaration, according to his promiſe by the prophet Jeremiah, 'I 'will cleanſe them from all their iniquity, whereby 'they have ſinned againſt me; and I will pardon all 'their iniquities*.'—Still however there was a remembrance of ſins by the ſacrifices that were offered, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect; complete forgiveneſs, in the full ſenſe of the expreſſions we have been conſidering, being one of the choice fruits of the redemption obtained by Jeſus Chriſt.—Contemplating with admiration and gratitude, the amiable character which the Lord God hath here aſſumed, let us earneſtly pray, that he will be pleaſed to grant us this important bleſſing with all its happy conſequences.

26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayeſt be juſtified.

To convince the Jewiſh people of their public defection, and the utter inſufficiency of their claim to any favour on account of their own merits; God called upon them, to produce any grounds whereupon they could ſupport their pretenſions. Such is the clemency of the divine procedure toward men, that they enjoy fair opportunity of ſtating every thing that may tend to their exculpation. Such is the conſummate equity of the divine adminiſtration, that God

* Jer. xxxiii. 8.

God doth not execute righteous judgments, until men are allowed to bring forward the vindication of their character and conduct. The Jewiſh people had alledged, that their crimes were greatly aggravated, and that the merit of their performances was much depreciated and forgotten. That this matter might be impartially diſcuſſed, God condeſcends to ſubmit it to trial, that it might appear whether or not this was indeed the caſe.—*Put me in remembrance*, &c. when, and where, and by which of my ſervants any injuſtice hath been done to you, in the repreſentations given of your conduct. On the ſuppoſition that any one inſtance of this ſort may have eſcaped my memory, I call upon you to put me in mind of it.—*Let us plead together.* Let the controverſy be agitated with candour and integrity. Bring forward your defence of thoſe actions, with which you have been charged as criminal; ſpecify your good deeds, your beſt ſervices, that we may ſee whether your crimes or merits are moſt conſiderable.—*Declare thou.* Make a free and full declaration of whatever you apprehend may ſerve your cauſe, and tend to your exculpation—*That thou mayeſt be juſtified*, abſolved from the charges that have been brought againſt you, and acquitted from the puniſhment which the crimes deſerved, you were ſaid to have committed.

27 Thy firſt father hath ſinned, and thy teachers have tranſgreſſed againſt me.

Another inſtance is here ſpecified, of the general revolt of the Jewiſh church from the ſervice of God; which extended not only to the common people, but to the principal perſons among them who were inveſted with ſacred offices. Commentators have adopted different opinions reſpecting the perſon denominated the firſt father. Some have ſuppoſed that Adam the firſt parent of the human race is intended; ſome have alledged that Abraham the renowned progenitor of the Jewiſh nation is meant; whilſt others have maintained

maintained that Urijah who was chief prieſt among that people in the days of Ahaz king of Judah, was the perſon of whom our Prophet ſpeaks. What is ſaid is true of each of them. Adam ſinned in eating the forbidden fruit; Abraham in calling in queſtion the truth of the promiſe given him by the Lord God; * and Urijah in building an altar after the pattern ſent him by Ahaz from Damaſcus; and in acting according to the orders he received from that prince, contrary to the divine command. As I do not perceive the propriety of introducing either of the two former into this argument, which was intended to convince the Jews, that they were guilty of thoſe enormous crimes which brought upon them the ſevere judgments of God; I am inclined to think that the high prieſt is here meant. To his everlaſting reproach it is recorded in the ſacred hiſtory, that he acted altogether inconſiſtently with his character and office †. Among the Hebrews, the prieſts were well known by the reſpectable name of fathers, as ſeems evident from Judg. xvii. 10. And the chief prieſt was the firſt father, the principal guardian of religion; the firſt man in point of office and dignity in the church. Notwithſtanding in that high character he greatly ſinned.

And thy teachers have tranſgreſſed againſt me. The Hebrew word ſignifies alſo thy interpreters, whoſe buſineſs is to explain the import and deſign of ſacred truths, precepts, and inſtitutions—or thy interceſſors, whoſe employment is to offer ſacrifices unto God; and to plead with him in behalf of the people, for the mercies he hath promiſed to beſtow. Men in this ſacred profeſſion had joined with the high prieſt, in apoſtatizing from God, and corrupting the ordinances of his inſtitution. This appears plainly to have been the caſe, from 2 Chron. xxx. 3. where it is written, that when Hezekiah ſent letters to all Iſrael and Judah, to come and keep the paſſover to the Lord God of Iſrael, they could not obſerve it at that time,

* Gen. xv. 8. † See 2 Kings. xvi. 10, *et ſeq.*

time, becauſe the prieſts had not ſanctified themſelves ſufficiently.—How deplorable the ſtate of the church, when not only the common people, but the chief office bearers take an active part in promoting the general defection from the ſervice of God, and grievouſly tranſgreſs againſt him with whom they ought earneſtly to intercede, not only for themſelves but for thoſe in whoſe behalf they officiate.

28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the ſanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curſe, and Iſrael to reproaches.

God having exerciſed much long-ſuffering toward the apoſtate Iſraelitiſh church, which perſiſted in idolatry and other crimes; and the leading people among them, who had proſtituted their dignity to the worſt of purpoſes—he ſolemnly declares that he would inflict upon them righteous judgments, and puniſh, in a ſpecial manner, thoſe who were employed in miniſtering in his ſanctuary. That the puniſhment to be inflicted by divine vengeance, might correſpond to the crime for which it was executed, Jehovah threatened to profane thoſe who had profaned and poured contempt on his authority, his houſe, altar, and worſhip, and treated them in an irreverent manner; *i. e.* to deliver them to the will of their enemies, by whom they were to be reduced to the moſt humiliating diſtreſſes. He farther declared his fixed determination of giving Jacob to the curſe, *&c.* involving in it the moſt terrible calamities, and among others, the greateſt reproach and contempt.—This awful denunciation was accordingly executed under the reign of Manaſſeh, and the other kings of Judah who ſucceeded Joſiah *. From many of the diſcourſes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we learn, that in their days the temple and worſhip of God were ſhockingly profaned, and that corruption dreadfully prevailed among the people †. On theſe accounts

* See 2 Kings. xxi. 4, *et ſeq.* † See Jer. xxxii. 32.

accounts the Lord who is righteous in all his ways, delivered them into the hands of the Chaldeans; who diveſted the prieſts of their functions, ſpoiled them, and reduced them to a level with the meaneſt of the people, who were conſigned to captivity and ſlaughter —And afterwards he gave them into the hands of the Romans, by whom they were ſlain by the ſword, and periſhed under the moſt dreadful calamities.—Would you then eſcape the awful judgments by which they were deſolated, avoid thoſe ſins which brought upon them the curſe, the moſt terrible deſtruction, which rendered them a reproach and a deriſion; and implore mercy from God to pardon our ſins, and heal our backſlidings.

CHAP. XLIV.

YET now hear, O Jacob, my ſervant; and Iſrael, whom I have choſen.

In the firſt five verſes of this chapter, which, as I ſuppoſe, contains the laſt ſection of this diſcourſe; God graciouſly comforts his church with promiſes of the moſt excellent benefits, amidſt the awful judgments he had denounced againſt the hypocritical and profane. Indeed, throughout the whole of this prophetical oration, there alternately occurs the moſt terrible threatenings againſt the impenitent, and the moſt reviving aſſurances to the choſen, called, and faithful. Having predicted the great calamities which were to be inflicted upon the wicked, who were to be delivered to the curſe, of which reproach and contempt are eſſential ingredients; the Lord, by the Prophet, calls for attention from the children of Jacob, whom he named Iſrael. This demand, which was primarily made on the natural poſterity of that patriarch, extends to all the true Iſrael of God; for whatſoever

whatſoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Hearken then, men and brethren, with devout attention and diligent application of mind, ſo as to underſtand, believe, and obey the word of God.—Compliance with this call, is urged from the intimate connection wherein you ſtand to the Moſt High. Like the patriarch and his poſterity, you are the ſervants of God, who are admitted to participate in the privileges of his family, to whom he communicates the knowledge of his will, and whoſe chief employment conſiſts in receiving his direction, in executing his pleaſure, and ſubmitting to his appointments—*And Iſrael whom he hath choſen*, of his good pleaſure, that you may be his peculiar treaſure. All who are Iſraelites indeed are diſtinguiſhed in ſcripture by this deſignation: they are the choſen, and the elect of God, whom hath appropriated to himſelf, as his peculiar people, and from whom he expects prompt obedience to whatſoever he requires.—To whom ſhould ſervants liſten but to their Maſter, who hath appointed them to hold this ſtation and office. Hearken then to the word of the Lord, which he addreſſes to you. Hear what God the Lord will ſpeak; look to him, that he may accompany his word with power and efficacy; and conſider it as particularly deſigned for your inſtruction. Guard againſt every thing that might diſtract your attention, or that might efface any good impreſſions thereby made upon your mind, and hinder you from bringing forth fruit unto life everlaſting.

2 Thus ſaith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my ſervant; and thou, Jeſurun, whom I have choſen.

To excite the cloſeſt attention to what follows, the ſubject is introduced with great ſolemnity; and the

the Lord God again reminds his people of their intimate connection with him.—*Thus ſaith the Lord*, the omnipotent Jehovah, who gave being to the patriarch Jacob, and to all his natural poſterity, that were called by his name: who ſoon after he brought them out of Egypt, formed them into a church, and enriched them with many precious bleſſings. Though great part of them were carnal, and walked as men, yet among them were God's choſen ſervants; who in a ſpiritual ſenſe, were formed to ſhew forth his praiſes; on whom he conferred ſignal benefits, repreſenting the ineſtimable privileges enjoyed by thoſe who are Iſraelites indeed—*Who will help thee*, under the weakneſſes with which thou art diſtreſſed, to ſurmount difficulties and dangers; who will uphold thee when ready to fall, and enable to perform the various ſervices aſſigned thee; who will go before thee, as your guide, and be at your right hand that you ſhall not be moved. At all times, and in every ſtate, you ſhall have all neceſſary aſſiſtance and relief, ſo that as your day is, ſo ſhall be your ſtrength. —*Fear not*. Frequently is this important direction repeated in theſe prophecies. Perplexing, diſmaying fears, are apt to ſeize on the people of God on various occaſions; eſpecially when called to arduous ſervices, when apprehenſive they are in dangerous circumſtances, and when they receive particular meſſages from God. Deſpondency and timidity in ſuch ſeaſons, are highly unbecoming the ſervants of Jehovah, and unſuitable to the intimate relation wherein they ſtand to him who is their help and deliverer. They are therefore again called upon, to baniſh from their minds thoſe anxious diſquieting fears, which indiſpoſe them for performing aright the duties incumbent upon them, and for ſuſtaining with patience and fortitude the afflictions wherewith they are viſited.—To inculcate with the greater energy compliance with this admonition, the name of Jacob is again repeated, and that of Jeſurun is added. The name Jeſurun, which is four times given to the peo-

ple of Iſrael in the ſacred oracles, is probably derived from a Hebrew word that ſignifies upright. This deſignation might be given to them, becauſe they were inſtructed to entertain right ſentiments concerning the exiſtence, the perfections, and providence of God; becauſe they profeſſed the true religion, and among them were many upright worſhippers of the living God. Perſons of this character ought not to indulge in diſtreſſing fears, but conſtantly to truſt in their ſure and all-ſufficient help, and to hearken to his faithful word, which ſaith,

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirſty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy ſeed, and my bleſſing upon thine offſpring:

As a ſure ground of conſolation to the ſervants of God, explicit aſſurance is given them of the abundant communication of ſpiritual bleſſings, promiſed in an agreeable variety of expreſſion, in which our Prophet becomes his own interpreter. The benefits to be beſtowed, are ſignificantly repreſented by the uſeful element of water—The rich abundance with which they are to be conveyed, is intimated in the compariſon, as floods; and, leſt their nature might be miſtaken, they are denominated God's Spirit and bleſſing.—The renewing, ſanctifying, and comforting influences of the Spirit of God, are often ſpoken of in ſcripture under the name of water *, which when received into the ſtomach and bowels, is moſt refreſhing, and ſometimes medicinal; when applied to the hands and other parts of the body, it ſerves to cleanſe and purify. But the alluſion here, is to the water that comes down in rain from above, and falls upon the earth. This precious benefit is the gift of God, who conveys it from the large repoſitories of the clouds, and diſpenſes it in larger or leſſer meaſures, according to his good pleaſure. Hence theſe words of

* John vii. 37, 38, 39.

of the prophet Jeremiah, 'Are there among the va-'nities of the Gentiles that can cauſe rain, or can 'the heavens give ſhowers? Art not thou he, O Lord 'our God, therefore we will wait upon thee *?' The water which falls from heaven, moiſtens, ſoftens, beautifies, and fertilizes the earth into which it ſokes. On theſe and ſimilar accounts, it affords a ſignificant emblem of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which come down from the Father of lights; being the enriching donation he beſtows upon his church, and which he diſpenſes in every place, and to every one ſeverally as he will. Like water that falls gently in rain upon the ground, the Spirit of God meliorates, ſoftens, adorns, and fructifies the hearts of men to which he is communicated. He quickens, he ſanctifies, he ſtrengthens, and comforts; he renders fruitful in every good work, and cauſes to increaſe in the knowledge of God. He adminiſters all that is requiſite to the growth of the ſpiritual life, to progreſs in the ways of God; and produces thoſe happy effects in the minds and lives of men, whereby they adorn their profeſſion, and from whence they may ſafely infer, that they are beloved of God.—Such is the nature and effects of the ineſtimable bleſſing which Jehovah promiſes.

To pour in *floods*, in vaſt plenty on thoſe who are here deſcribed. The Hebrew word ſignifies to pour any liquid, ſo that it ſhall adhere and ſoke into the ſubſtance on which it falls; that if hard, it may mollify it; if hot, it may cool; if defiled, it may take off every impurity. What a noble diſplay of the divine goodneſs and liberality is here exhibited by Jehovah, who promiſes to impart to his church, the gifts and graces of his Spirit, in ſuch rich abundance, as the clouds pour down rain upon the earth, when viſited, and watered, and greatly enriched with the river of God; when the ridges thereof are watered, and the furrows thereof ſettled! What wonderful extraordinary effects doth he pro-

duce

* Chap. xiv. 22.

duce by renovating the faculties and diſpoſitions of men, and by forming them to a new courſe of action; in conſequence whereof they become the workmanſhip of God, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works. He intereſts in the all-ſufficient Saviour, who reſcues from the curſe and everlaſting contempt, and reſtores to forfeited favour and felicity; he imparts the moſt amiable graces with all neceſſary conſolation, and prepares for the enjoyment of God. He cauſes them that love him to inherit ſubſtance, and fills all their treaſures. The powerful argument therefore by which Jeſus Chriſt urges to faith, and importunity in prayer, is thus ſtated by the apoſtle Matthew, 'If ye 'then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto 'your children; how much more ſhall your Father 'who is in heaven give good things to them that aſk 'him*?' Is thus expreſſed by the Evangeliſt Luke, 'How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give 'the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him†.' This is the bleſſing mentioned in the laſt clauſe of the verſe; the bleſſing of bleſſings, their ſum and ſubſtance, which imparts true happineſs to all who thankfully accept of it; and which God promiſes to pour, and to give as floods, and elſewhere to open the windows of heaven, and to pour out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room enough to contain it‡.—Conſider next the deſcription of thoſe to whom this promiſe ſhall be verified.

The thirſty and the dry ground, &c. If theſe expreſſions are intended to ſignify different claſſes of people, the former may denote, in a figurative ſenſe, the Jews who had not yet received the Holy Spirit, in that plentiful meaſure which they earneſtly deſired, and, unſatisfied with preſent enjoyments, were ardently longing for farther communications of divine grace, and the ſalvation of the Lord. The latter may ſignify the Gentiles, who had not been favoured with divine ordinances and divine influences, whoſe condition hath been exhibited in preceding paſſages

* Matth. vii. 11. † Chap. xi. 13. ‡ Mal. iii. 10.

paſſages of theſe prophecies, as uncultivated and barren, reſembling a wilderneſs. The promiſe may indeed be conſidered as given to all to whom the deſcription is applicable, who are ſolicitous to enjoy the bleſſings it contains.—This gracious aſſurance is farther extended to the ſeed and offspring of Jacob, to his natural poſterity under the former diſpenſation; and to his ſpiritual children in every age under the New Teſtament. In the words of the apoſtle Peter to the men of Iſrael, 'the promiſe is unto you, and 'to your children, and to all that are afar off, even 'as many as the Lord our God ſhall call *.' The promiſe both of the Meſſiah and his ſalvation, and of the Spirit, with his benign influences, was given not only to them, but to their children in following generations; and to all that are at a diſtance from God, as were the Gentiles, even to as many as the Lord our God ſhall call, according to his purpoſe and grace. To people of this deſcription, whether Jews or Gentiles, fathers or children, the promiſe ſhall be verified.—Inſtructed in the nature of this important bleſſing, and ſenſible of its excellence and neceſſity, let us earneſtly plead with God, that he would accompliſh to us this promiſe, and enable us faithfully to improve the benefits he beſtows for the purpoſes for which they are conferred. To you I ſay what Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to the woman of Samaria, who was the firſt fruits of the Gentile converts, 'If thou kneweſt 'the gift of God, and who it is that ſaith unto thee, 'Give me to drink, thou wouldſt have aſked of him, 'and he would have given thee living water †.'

4 And they ſhall ſpring up *as* among the graſs, as willows by the water courſes.

The joyful conſequences of the heavenly benediction being poured upon the church, are beautifully repreſented by two inſtructive ſimilitudes. Thoſe to whom the Holy Spirit is plentifully given, ſhall reſemble

* Acts ii. 39. † John iv. 10.

ſemble in rapid luxuriant growth the ever verdant graſs, in rich well-watered ſoil, where vegetation is ſtrongeſt and moſt abundant. Enriched by the influences of divine grace, they ſhall flouriſh in all the vigour and beauty of the ſpiritual life, and remarkably increaſe in holineſs, in grace, and endeavours to advance the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt.—The quick progreſs of the church, watered with abundant communications of the Holy Spirit, ſhall be like that of willows planted beſide brooks of water. They ſhall increaſe with the increaſe of God, *i. e.* with an exceeding great increaſe in knowledge, in grace, in duty, and ſtability; they ſhall grow up in all things to Chriſt the head, and ſpeedily advance to the meaſure of the ſtature of perfect men in Chriſt Jeſus. Theſe elegant figures, derived from well known familiar objects, frequently occur in ſcripture; and like lights ſerve to adorn and illuſtrate our Prophet's predictions, whilſt they exhibit with peculiar beauty the happy progreſs in the divine life, which reſults from God's Spirit and bleſſing. In conſequence of receiving this celeſtial benediction, the people of God become more flouriſhing, and grow better every day; they go from ſtrength to ſtrength; and, amidſt many failings and various viciſſitudes, the farther they make progreſs, the greater their happineſs and comfort. They become gradually more eſtabliſhed in the belief of the truth, more conformed to the will of God, more conſtant in the practice of every good work, more ſolicitous to glorify God, and more actively uſeful by the faithful diſcharge of the duties of their reſpective ſtations.—You who have received the promiſe of the Spirit of God, ought to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt; and to take heed that this knowledge be not barren, but fruitful in holineſs and righteouſneſs, to the praiſe and glory of God. The accompliſhment of God's promiſes ought always to be attended with the diligent performance of duty, in order to diſplay their influence and happy effects. Endeavour, then, by

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the purity and fruitfulneſs of your lives, by amiable ſimplicity, humble condeſcenſion, prudent exertion, and patient ſubmiſſion, to ſhew forth the praiſes of him who hath called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. We beſeech you then, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to pleaſe God, ſo ye would abound more and more.

5 One ſhall ſay, I *am* the LORD's; and another ſhall call *himſelf* by the name of Jacob; and another ſhall ſubſcribe *with* his hand unto the LORD, and ſurname *himſelf* by the name of Iſrael.

The large acceſſions which were to be made to the church of God, in conſequence of the promiſe of the Spirit being fulfilled, are here foretold in an agreeable variety of expreſſion.—The perſons by whom this prediction was to be accompliſhed are pointed at in the words *one, and another*, which ſeem intended to intimate, that there were to be many individuals of every nation, city, community, and condition, by whom this prophecy ſhould be verified; each of whom was to adopt the language before us, ſaying, *I am the Lord's*, not only in the extenſive ſenſe of the expreſſion in which the world and all that it contains belongeth unto him: But I ſolemnly acknowledge that I am thy property in a more peculiar manner, that thou haſt an unalienable right to diſpoſe of me and all that I poſſeſs, and that it is my determined purpoſe to manifeſt that I am truly thy ſervant. As thy creature I conſtantly depend on thee for every bleſſing; as thy redeemed renewed creature, I would henceforth live under a grateful ſenſe of the infinite obligations thou haſt brought me to feel, for the riches of thy mercy and grace. All my powers and faculties, all my talents and poſſeſſions, all my ſervices and influence, I conſecrate to thy honour and glory. All my intereſts, temporal and ſpiritual,

I reſign into thy bleſſed hands, to be diſpoſed of by thee as ſeemeth good in thy ſight. With unfeigned pleaſure I devote myſelf to thy ſervice, in the joyful hope that thou wilt inſtruct me by thy holy word and good Spirit, ſo as to make me wiſe unto ſalvation; that in thee I ſhall have righteouſneſs and ſtrength; that thou wilt govern my inclinations and actions by thy perfect law of liberty; and grant me grace to perform the duties incumbent upon me, in the relations wherein I ſtand connected with thee, and my brethren of mankind. Whilſt I ſay that I am thine, it is in the firm belief that thou, Lord, wilt be my bountiful benefactor, conſtant protector, and all-ſufficient portion—And that I ſhall be thine in the day thou makeſt up thy jewels. This language I adopt with the greateſt ſincerity, with deep humility, in the pleaſing hope that my offering ſhall be acceptable unto God through Jeſus Chriſt, being ſanctified by the Holy Ghoſt.—Such ſeems to be the import of this acknowledgment, I am the Lord's.

And another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord. Some critics have obſerved that the Hebrew words which are thus tranſlated in our Engliſh Bible, might be rendered, *ſhall write upon his hand, I am the Lord's.* They ſuppoſe the expreſſion refers to the practice of marking upon the hand, or ſome other part of the body, the ſtate of the perſon, and to whom he belonged. The ſoldier was marked with the name of his commander, the ſlave with the name of his maſter, the idolater with the name of his god. Tho' the words admit of this interpretation, and may allude to this cuſtom, which gives a juſt and forcible meaning to the prediction, inaſmuch as every one who is truly devoted to the Lord hath an indelible character impreſſed upon him by the ſeal of the living God. Yet I adhere to the tranſlation before me. Another ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord; that in this ſolemn manner he may fix in his mind, a permanent ſenſe of the obligations he hath brought himſelf under, to be the Lord's dutiful ſubject

ject and faithful ſervant. Who can heſitate to approve of this practice, which in other matters of much leſs moment is often adopted. When a ſervant gives up himſelf to be inſtructed by any maſter, or if one conveys right to another perſon of a piece of ground, the tranſaction is committed to writing, and ſubſcribed by the parties concerned. Why ought not, then, this more important buſineſs to be negotiated or ratified in the ſame way? The Lord God hath written to us the great things of his law; and among theſe he hath recorded that he will be the God of his people: Is it not, then, highly proper that his people, on whom he pours his Spirit and bleſſing, who by writing confirm their other deeds, ſubſcribe, as here foretold, this important declaration, I am the Lord's.

And another ſhall call himſelf by the name of Jacob, and ſurname himſelf, &c. The practice of calling one by the name of another plainly intimates, that there is ſome real connection or apparent reſemblance betwixt them in temper, condition, and conduct. The peculiar people of God in all ages have been diſtinguiſhed by the name of the patriarch Jacob, who was called Iſrael. The church of God under the Old Teſtament were conſtituted chiefly of his natural poſterity, and under the New Teſtament they are his ſpiritual children, who like him profeſs faith in the true God, are employed in his ſervice, and place their chief happineſs in the bleſſings contained in his promiſes. In the Lord they are juſtified and glory; they ſtudy to reſemble the renowned father in reverence for God, in patience, contentment, and the virtues which adorned his life. Perſons of this deſcription, in whatever nation or country, are the children of Iſrael, the work of God's hands, who ſanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Iſrael, and call themſelves by his name. Every one who practically makes this good confeſſion, profeſſedly joins himſelf to the people of God; that as far as circumſtances permit he may be the

companion of them that fear the Lord, that he may participate in their privileges, imitate their example, and inherit their portion. In this manner people take upon them the fellowſhip of the ſaints, as the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks, giving themſelves firſt to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. According to this prediction, they ſay they are the Lord's, they aſſume the name of Iſraelites, and walk with them by the ſame rule, minding the ſame things. As with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, ſo with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation.—A remarkable inſtance of the accompliſhment of this prophecy occurs in the book of Nehemiah. There we read that the children of Iſrael entered into covenant with God, which, through the care of Ezra the ſcribe, with the prieſts and Levites, was ſolemnly ratified. It was written and ſealed by the princes and others and they entered into an oath to walk in God's law, to obſerve and do all his commandments *. And after the Holy Spirit was poured upon the apoſtles and the firſt Chriſtian church, this prediction was eminently fulfilled by the multitudes of believers that were added unto the Lord †. In following ages large acceſſions of converts have, as here foretold, acknowledged that they belong unto the Lord, have numbered themſelves with his diſciples, and been received into their fellowſhip.—'I beſeech you, brethren, 'by the mercies of God, that ye preſent your bodies 'a living ſacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which 'is your reaſonable ſervice ‡.' I intreat you, by the kindneſſes of divine providence, that you have received, by the ſpiritual advantages and bleſſings you enjoy through the goſpel, by the benefits and favours you are encouraged to expect; I requeſt you, by all the mercies of time and eternity, to conſecrate yourſelves and ſervices to the Lord. As the Author of your being, he hath unqueſtionable right to you and

* See Nehemiah 9th and 10th chapters. † Acts v. 14.
‡ Rom. xii. 1.

and all that you poſſeſs; and as your Redeemer, who ranſomed you by the blood of his own Son, he hath acquired an additional indefeaſible right to both your ſouls and bodies. Neglect not, then, this reaſonable ſervice which your Creator, Preſerver, and Redeemer moſt juſtly demands, whoſe right to you and all that you have, can never be alienated or ſuperſeded.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE third diſcourſe contained in the fourth book of theſe prophecies, which begins, as I ſuppoſe, at the 6th verſe of this chapter, and extends to the 48th chapter, may be diſtributed into four parts—The firſt compriſed in this chapter relates to the deliverance of the church, accompliſhed by means of Cyrus king of Perſia—The ſecond deſcribes the happy conſequences which were to reſult from that event, by the vocation of the Gentiles, chap. xlv.—The third predicts the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, and demonſtrates the abſurdity of idolatrous practices, to which that people were ſhamefully addicted, chap. xlvi.—The fourth repreſents farther the fall of that great and powerful kingdom, with the cauſes that contributed to bring on its deſtruction, chap. xlvii.—The portion of the diſcourſe on which we now enter, intended to convince the Jews of the vanity and abſurdity of idolatry, and to lead them to repentance, commences by eſtabliſhing the divinity of the God of Iſrael, from the illuſtrious operations of divine providence which he had clearly foretold, and that exactly correſponded to the predictions, ver. 6—8.—It then exhibits at great length, and with much energy, the folly and baſeneſs of idolatry, v. 9—20.—After which the people who had been enſnared by ſuperſtition and idolatrous worſhip, are invited to repentance, to which they are encouraged by the moſt gracious aſſurances, v. 21, 22.—Toward the concluſion of the chapter, Cyrus, the anointed of Jehovah, is introduced as the deliverer of God's people, who was to avenge his injured glory, and to confound the wiſe men of Babylon, who ſet themſelves in oppoſition to the ſervants of the true God, v. 23—28.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIV.

6 THUS ſaith the LORD, the king of Iſrael, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hoſts; I *am* the firſt, and I am the laſt; and beſide me *there is* no God.

The ſubject is introduced by a magnificent exordium, in which Jehovah aſſumes thoſe auguſt titles he claimed in the preceding diſcourſe, and aſſerts his infinite majeſty and glory. Having already had occaſion to open the import of theſe ſublime characters, I ſhall not at preſent occupy your time, by endeavouring farther to explain their meaning. It may ſuffice to obſerve, that the frequent repetition of theſe illuſtrious deſignations, gives dignity and ſolemnity to what is delivered; whilſt it plainly intimates their high importance, that they ought to be the pleaſing ſubject of frequent attentive contemplation; and that if rightly conſidered, they ſhould awaken the cloſeſt attention to the word of the Lord of hoſts.

7 ¶ And who, as I, ſhall call, and ſhall declare it, and ſet it in order for me, ſince I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and ſhall come, let them ſhew unto them.

The Lord the king of Iſrael claims to himſelf the knowledge of future events, as his peculiar prerogative, which he denies the idols of the nations do in any meaſure poſſeſs. The expreſſions are truly ſignificant and moſt emphatical—*Who as I ſhall call*, &c. who calleth the things that are not as though they were; who aſſigns to Cyrus king of Perſia, long before I call him into exiſtence, the arduous work he is to perform; who by the omnipotent act of my will, and the irreſiſtible authority of my command, hath

hath appointed to him this important ſervice, which he ſhall punctually execute. Who of the ſtrange gods that you fooliſhly honour, can give any proof like this of the efficacy of their volitions, and the extent of their power?—*And ſhall declare it*, clearly unfolding the circumſtances relative to ſome improbable great event, at the diſtance of ages; exactly delineating the agents to be employed; their operations and effects; and aſſume the entire direction of the buſineſs, ſo as conſummate wiſdom and faithfulneſs may be conſpicuouſly diſplayed in its execution—*And ſet it in order for me.* The Hebrew word, which is uſed in military affairs to expreſs the diſpoſition of an army drawn up for battle, is here employed to ſignify the arrangement of thoſe decrees, according to which all things are invariably conducted. Who ſhall place in exact order, the minuteſt circumſtances reſpecting the ſuppoſed incident, ſo that they ſhall all be fulfilled by the event, and the event ſhall perfectly correſpond with the prediction.—*Since I appointed the ancient people*, the poſterity of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in my purpoſes, in my predictions, and by my providence, to be my peculiar people, and to poſſeſs the land of Canaan, promiſed to their fathers. During this long period of time, none of the idols of the nations ever gave a particular deſcription of any diſtant future event, ſimilar to thoſe foretold by my ſervants, nor can they now produce any ſuch evidence of their divinity—*And the things that are coming*, &c. being nigh at hand, to take place in a few years or months; or the things that ſhall happen after a long ſeries of time hath elapſed, being more remote and at a greater diſtance. Let them ſhew them to thoſe who deſire to be ſatisfied as to their foreknowledge. If they cannot in this manner demonſtrate the juſtice of their claim, to the homage and ſervices of their votaries, they are not gods; and beſide the Lord of hoſts there is no god.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not

I told thee from that time, and have declared *it?* ye *are* even my witneſſes. Is there a God beſide me? yea, *there is* no God: I know not *any*.

Since there is no other God beſides Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, his people ought not to be ſurpriſed or intimidated at the appearance of events which have been foretold by the prophets, and that ſhall terminate in their benefit. Thoſe who enjoy the ſpecial protection of the Almighty, ſhould not be alarmed or diſmayed at thoſe diſpenſations of providence that wear the moſt frowning aſpect, and which ſeem to be the moſt adverſe and terrifying. 'The upright,' ſaith the king of Iſrael, 'ſhall not be afraid of evil 'tidings; his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord; his 'heart is eſtabliſhed; he ſhall not be afraid *.' The tidings of calamity and diſtreſs ought not to ſhake his confidence in God, or afflict him with timidity. To this tranquil heroic ſtate of mind, the ſervants of God are here exhorted—*Have not I told thee from that time*, &c. This expreſſion might have a peculiar reference to the early period wherein God had employed his prophets to predict the deliverance of the Jewiſh people from captivity at Babylon. From that time Jehovah declared, that Cyrus, with his army of Medes and Perſians, were the inſtruments that ſhould overthrow the city and empire of Babylon—*Ye are even my witneſſes*, who are well acquainted with the truth of this declaration; and to you I appeal to confirm and eſtabliſh the fact. Have not you heard my ſervants often publicly aſſert, and have not you their prophecies in your hands, which give teſtimony to the truth of what I affirm; ſo that beſides yourſelves I call no other evidences.

Is there a God beſide me? &c. The proper reply to this queſtion is given in the words that immediately follow, *Yea there is no God*, &c. This important truth is frequently aſſerted in the moſt explicit manner throughout

* Pſal. cxii. 7, 8.

throughout the holy ſcriptures, and particularly in the prophecies now before us. It is naturally implied in God's being the firſt cauſe of all things; for were there other deities beſides him, they muſt be the production of his creating power; they muſt have been formed for his glory, conſequently they poſſeſs only a derived exiſtence, and therefore they cannot be the proper objects of adoration, worſhip, and ſupreme affection. Beſides infinite perfection being the prerogative of Jehovah, it cannot belong to more than one God; and to him alone it muſt be limited, ſo as not to be aſcribed to any other.—The word here rendered *God*, ſignifies alſo a rock, and is thus tranſlated on the margin of ſome bibles. This deſignation is given with great propriety to Jehovah the God of Iſrael; who poſſeſſes eternal, unchangeable exiſtence, who is the immoveable foundation of the faith and hope of his people; and from him proceeds all the protection, the ſafety, and the ſalvation they enjoy, or have in proſpect. It is he who ſupports them under afflictions; who enables them to repel temptations; who protects them from enemies, and renders them ſuperior to every adverſe power.—Since we know that there is no god beſide the living and true God, let us take heed that we ſet not up any idol in our hearts, to rival him in our affection, or to withdraw from him our obedience and ſubmiſſion. Beware of covetouſneſs, which is ſtiled idolatry; beware of making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof—of confiding in an arm of fleſh—of calling in queſtion his glorious ſovereignty and dominion—or of expecting from the creature that which is only to be found in the Creator.

9 ¶ They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things ſhall not profit: and they *are* their own witneſſes; they ſee not, nor know, that they may be aſhamed.

Our

Our Prophet, ſpeaking in the name of God, proceeds to expoſe the vanity and abſurdity of idolatry, and to exhibit in ſtrong colours, the egregious folly conſpicuous in every thing relative to this ſhameful practice. In treating this ſubject, he ſeems to have had peculiar reference to the graven images and idols that were worſhipped in the kingdom of Babylon, which is thus graphically deſcribed by the prophet Jeremiah, 'It is the land of graven images, and they 'are mad upon their idols *.' On this topic Iſaiah dilates at much length; he diſplays great energy of expreſſion, elegance of compoſition, and force of argument; treating idolatry with juſt ſeverity; ſetting it forth in every view as highly unreaſonable and prepoſterous in the extreme. This part of his diſcourſe requires little illuſtration.—*They that make a graven image*, &c. The words may refer not only to thoſe who formed idols, but to the images themſelves, and thoſe who paid them homage. All of them are ſaid not merely to be vain, or to have much vanity in them; but without exception they are all of them pronounced vanity itſelf. What deſcription could have been given more ſignificant, and at the ſame time more contemptuous.—*And their delectable things ſhall not profit.* The idols which were made of gold and other precious metals; the images curiouſly framed of wood, overlaid in the fineſt manner with gold, which were moſt valued by their votaries, and wherein they greatly delighted, were not to yield them any ſubſtantial advantage; on the contrary, they were to be attended with diſappointment and ſorrow. The Jews therefore who turned from the living God to the ſervice of idols, are ſaid to change their glory for that which doth not profit: and the Gentiles turning from dead idols to ſerve the true God, thus acknowledge their ſin and folly; 'Our 'fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things where-'in is no profit †.'—*And they are their own witneſſes.* This expreſſion may refer to the idols themſelves, to

* Chap. l. 38.

† Jer. xvi. 19.

thoſe who formed, and to thoſe who worſhipped them, and ſeems to allude to the preceding verſe, where God ſaith to the people, 'Ye are my witneſſes.' The ſervants of the true God were his witneſſes, who had ſeen and been acquainted with whatever was proper and uſeful for them to know. Whereas the worſhippers and makers of idols, were witneſſes who could atteſt, that they neither ſaw nor knew any thing; whilſt they gave evidence that they themſelves were devoid of underſtanding—*That they may be aſhamed* of their extreme folly and abſurd conduct, in making and ſerving graven images, from which they could not derive any real benefit.

10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?

A ſhort but ſharp reproof, is adminiſtered to thoſe who were addicted to the criminal practices above deſcribed. Who is ſo fanatical or ſottiſh, as firſt to make, and then do homage to what cannot poſſibly yield him any real advantage. Man cannot do more than form an image reſembling a creature, of which he hath ſome idea; but is incapable of exhibiting any juſt repreſentation of the inviſible God, whom no perſon hath ſeen or can ſee. And after the image is framed, it is good for nothing; it can neither do good nor evil; whilſt it expoſes the maker to the awful diſpleaſure of him who will not give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven images. The eternal Jehovah who gave exiſtence to the whole creation, is worſhipped by his intelligent offſpring on account of his tranſcendent majeſty and ſupreme excellence; on account of the ſubſtantial bleſſings they have received or hope to enjoy. But what a contradiction in terms, to aſſert that to be a god which was made by the hands of men, and how unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that any real benefit can be attained by this odious practice.—Alas! however, that there are many who make themſelves idols, though averſe

to

to acknowledge the crime. They are ready to ſay as Jacob to Laban reſpecting his idols, With whomſoever they are found, let him not live; whereas they lie concealed in almoſt every man's heart. Beware then of this ſin, againſt which you are often cautioned in ſcripture.

11 Behold, all his fellows ſhall be aſhamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them ſtand up; *yet* they ſhall fear, *and* they ſhall be aſhamed together.

Attention is demanded to the diſgraceful conſequences, which follow the abſurd practice of forming and ſerving idols. All concerned with the principal agent in this deteſtable buſineſs, who have contributed their aid in fabricating imaginary deities, or falſe repreſentations of the inviſible God, and who have paid them homage, ſhall be confounded at the recollection of their extreme folly; and the infamy they have incurred by the baſe crime they have committed.—*And the workmen they are of men.* The tradeſmen who had been employed in making idols, notwithſtanding they boaſted that they were poſſeſſed of reaſon and underſtanding; yet by this abominable wickedneſs they proſtituted their abilities to the worſt purpoſes, and proved a diſgrace to human nature. On that account they ſeem here to be upbraided—*Let them all be gathered together*, who have been engaged in this occupation, and in idolatrous practices—*Let them ſtand up* and plead their own cauſe, and try if they can vindicate their conduct from the folly and abſurdity with which it is charged—*Yet they ſhall fear* to ſupport ſuch criminal conduct, conſcious that they are incapable of juſtifying, what muſt be inevitably reprobated as odious, deſerving ſevere puniſhment.—*They ſhall be aſhamed together*, and prove a diſgrace to themſelves, and to thoſe with whom they aſſociated; when their perverſe wickedneſs

wickedneſs ſhall be laid open to public view, and they ſhall inherit the juſt reward due to thoſe, who have changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man.

12 The ſmith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and faſhioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the ſtrength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his ſtrength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

Our Prophet, poſſeſſed of a lively imagination, proceeds under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to deſcribe the whole proceſs employed in the fabrication of images. They were commonly made of wood or braſs, and overlaid with ſilver and gold; as is abundantly evident from many paſſages of ſcripture, and particularly from the elegant deſcription given of them by the prophet Jeremiah, 'One cutteth (ſaith 'he) a tree out of the foreſt with the ax, they deck it 'with ſilver and with gold; they faſten it with nails 'and with hammers, that it move not; they are up-'right as the palm tree, but ſpeak not; they muſt need 'be borne, becauſe they cannot go *.' The ſmith is firſt introduced very buſy in preparing various ſorts of inſtruments for the purpoſes of forming, and poliſhing the idol, that was to be faſhioned by the carpenter. This man is repreſented exerting all his might with unremitting aſſiduity in performing the various parts of his buſineſs, and ſo eagerly intent on his work, that he hardly allowed himſelf time to take the refreſhments requiſite to the ſupport of life. In conſequence whereof he became languid and feeble. It is unneceſſary to explain what is here ſimply narrated, the meaning of which is obvious to every one.

13 The carpenter ſtretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with

* Chap. x. 3, *et ſeq.*

with planes, and he marketh it out with the compaſs, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the houſe.

The carpenter is next exhibited forming, and beautifying the image with the utmoſt ſkill and induſtry. —1. *He ſtretcheth out the rule*, exactly meaſuring the dimenſions of the piece of timber whereof he intends to make the idol.—2. *He marketh it with a line*, to ſketch out the ſeveral parts of the figure into which it is to be ſhaped.—3. *He fitteth it out with planes*, to make it ſmooth, to give it a fine poliſh, and to bring it into form.—4. *He marketh it with the compaſs*, that he may proportion all its parts, to thoſe of the human body, which he takes for a model.—5. *He maketh it after the figure of a man*, adjuſting its features and parts, ſo that they might have a ſtriking reſemblance to the original, from which the idea was taken. —*According to the beauty of a man.* He endeavours to give it the ſymmetry, the comelineſs, and elegance for which man is moſt admired.—*That it may remain in the houſe* as the object of adoration, and homage of the family; or be reckoned worthy of a place in the temple of idols.—What an aſtoniſhing contraſt does this dead idol, faſhioned by the hands of men, and put into a houſe, form to the living God, who worketh all in all; who is not confined to one, but is preſent in all places; who obſerves and governs all things according to his ſovereign good pleaſure!

14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypreſs and the oak, which he ſtrengtheneth for himſelf among the trees of the foreſt: he planteth an aſh, and the rain doth nouriſh *it*.

Having mentioned in what manner idols were formed, our Prophet ſpecifies particularly the materials

rials whereof they were compoſed. They were made of trees which were planted by the hands of men, and that grow out of the earth—*He heweth them down cedars*, remarkable for their large ſize, for the ſtrength and incorruptibility of their timber —*And taketh the cypreſs*, which is ſaid to poſſeſs nearly the ſame qualities with the cedar—*And the oak*, well known for the firmneſs and durability of its wood—*Which he ſtrengtheneth for himſelf.* Having ſelected it from among the other trees with which it was ſurrounded, on account of its peculiar excellence: for making it into an image, he employs various means to give it the greater ſolidity and ſtability—*He planteth an aſh*, which furniſhes a durable timber, probably that when grown to maturity, it might afford proper materials for a beautiful idol—*And the rain doth nouriſh it*, as it doth the other trees of the foreſt.—In this, as in many other inſtances, we ſee the moſt valuable benefits which the Almighty confers upon the children of men, perverted to the worſt of purpoſes, and uſed as weapons of rebellion againſt himſelf.

15 Then ſhall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himſelf; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worſhippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth fleſh; he roaſteth roaſt, and is ſatisfied: yea, he warmeth *himſelf*, and ſaith, Aha, I am warm, I have ſeen the fire.

However excellent the timber whereof the image was made, it poſſeſſed no ſuperior intrinſic worth or virtue to other wood of the ſame kinds, being of the ſame nature, and ſerving the ſame purpoſes to which they

they are applied. Part of the tree of which an idol was faſhioned, was uſed for fuel to burn, that it might warm perſons when cold, or toaſt bread when baked; a proof that it was not eſteemed much preferable to any other timber. Notwithſtanding the idolater fooliſhly payed to it religious homage, though formed of no better materials than what were thrown into the fire.

17 And the reſidue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worſhippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and ſaith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.

Of that part of the tree which he did not burn, the idol maker formed an image, which he abſurdly perſuades himſelf is capable of reſcuing him from the evils to which he is expoſed, or by which he is oppreſſed. To this made god, he pays ſacred homage; before it, he proſtrates himſelf with the reverence due to the Deity, and preſents his ſupplication—*Deliver me* from the calamities wherein I am involved, from the dangers whereof I am afraid, and the enemies by whom I am threatened. The requeſt is inforced by the following argument: *For thou art my god;* the object of my chief affection, in whom I truſt for protection and ſafety; which I formed and beautified, and placed in my houſe. Some reaſons there are to ſuſpect that this idol was more honoured by its votary, than is the living God, the author of every deliverance, by many who profeſs to worſhip and ſerve him.

18 They have not known nor underſtood: for he hath ſhut their eyes, that they cannot ſee; *and* their hearts, that they cannot underſtand,

Ignorance and inſenſibility were the fatal ſour-

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ces from whence originated theſe odious criminal practices. The minds of idolaters are darkened by ignorance and folly; they know not God, they are entirely unacquainted with his ſupreme excellence and infinite majeſty. They conſequently glorify him not as God; they become vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh hearts are blinded; profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man. The reaſon is ſubjoined—*For he hath ſhut their eyes* *, &c. The perſon, I ſuppoſe, who inflicts this awful ſpiritual judgment upon thoſe who are given to abominable idolatry, is the prince of darkneſs, the god of this world, the implacable adverſary of mankind, who works mightily in the children of diſobedience, and blinds their minds, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them †. When he is permitted to ſhut the eyes and the hearts of men, they can neither perceive nor know what others clearly ſee and underſtand.

19 And none conſidereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor underſtanding to ſay, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, alſo I have baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roaſted fleſh, and eaten *it*: and ſhall I make the reſidue thereof an abomination? ſhall I fall down to the ſtock of a tree?

The ſentiment inculcated in this verſe is ſimply this, that inconſideration and want of thought is certainly one reaſon why people devote themſelves to the ſervice of idols. Did they ſeriouſly attend to the inconſiſtencies and abſurdities here mentioned, they would not perſiſt in ſuch unreaſonable wicked conduct—They would not make of the ſame tree fuel to burn and an idol to worſhip, which is emphatically

* Rom. i. 21. *et ſeq.* † 2 Cor. iv. 4.

tically denominated an abomination, having given riſe to many execrable ceremonies, deteſted by the righteous God and all good men.—How proper, how neceſſary, then, the ſtatute recorded Deut. vii. 26. 'Thou ſhalt utterly abhor an idol;' or, In deteſting thou ſhalt deteſt it; plainly intimating, that idolatry ought to be an object of the greateſt abhorrence.

20 He feedeth on aſhes: a deceived heart hath turned him aſide, that he cannot deliver his ſoul, nor ſay, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

The egregious folly and vanity of idolaters is farther repreſented in theſe words.—He that maketh and ſerveth an idol feedeth on aſhes, in which there is nothing ſubſtantial or pleaſant, nothing adapted to impart the leaſt nouriſhment and ſupport to the mind. His ſpiritual conſtitution being vitiated, and his taſte depraved, he hath recourſe to improper objects, which inſtead of yielding ſpiritual ſtrength and conſolation to the human heart, tend to render him poor, contemptible, and diſtreſſed.—*A deceived heart hath turned him aſide.* Not bad education, bad example, or bad inſtruction, hath led him into ſuperſtition and idolatry, though doubtleſs they had conſiderable influence in corrupting his mind; but his deteſtable conduct is aſcribed to a deceived heart, groſsly impoſed upon by the deceiver of mankind, and the deceitfulneſs of ſin. The heart being deluded, and having formed falſe apprehenſions of God, ſtarts aſide like a deceitful bow, into the ways of ſin.—*That he cannot deliver his ſoul* from thoſe ruinous practices wherein he is naturally prone to indulge, and to which he hath been long accuſtomed—*Nor ſay, is there not a lie in my right hand?* He cannot penitently acknowledge that deceit whereby he has impoſed on himſelf, and endeavours to delude thoſe around him. The illuſions of his own fancy conſpire with falſe reaſonings, hurtful prejudices, and

vicious cuſtoms, to hinder him from making this confeſſion, and determine him to hold faſt the errors he hath imbibed.—In this manner did our Prophet aim to convince idolaters, that the images which they made and adorned were not really gods, that they did not afford a juſt repreſentation of the true God; and therefore that he ought not to be worſhipped by images altogether unlike to him.—Beware, then, brethren, of entertaining falſe ſentiments concerning God, and of imagining that you may worſhip him acceptably in any other way than what he hath appointed. Take heed that you do not hold thoſe deluſive dangerous errors, whereby you may eſſentially injure yourſelves and others. I addreſs to you thoſe words of Moſes the man of God, recorded Deut. xi. 16, 'Take heed to yourſelves, that your heart be not 'deceived, and ye turn aſide, and ſerve other gods, 'and worſhip them, and the Lord's wrath be kindled 'againſt you.'

21 Remember theſe, O Jacob and Iſrael; for thou *art* my ſervant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my ſervant: O Iſrael, thou ſhalt not be forgotten of me.

The Lord God proceeds to urge his people to repent, and to flee from idolatry, by the conſideration of the folly and wickedneſs of the criminal practices he had been expoſing, and the gracious promiſes that were given them. In treating with them, he acts the part of a wiſe affectionate parent, who having ſharply animadverted on the faults of his children, his diſpleaſure ſubſides, and he kindly aſſures them of the moſt ample encouragements. How forcible are right words! how many powerful arguments are here ſuggeſted to perſuade men to return to God!—The firſt is taken from the preceding diſcourſe, wherein the abſurdity and criminality of idolatry was ſtrongly repreſented. Remember theſe things I have now ſaid, that you may ever maintain juſt abhorrence of the

the irrational ſhameful practice of making and ſerving idols. Frequent attentive recollection of the inſtructions delivered on this ſubject, may prove the mean of preſerving you from the abominable ſuperſtitions, by which multitudes have been degraded and deſtroyed. Never forget the comfortable truths I am about to mention; often call them to mind, and endeavour to live continually under a deep ſenſe of your intimate relation to God, and the infinite obligations he hath brought you under to return to his ſervice, by the mercies wherewith he hath loaded you, and the gracious aſſurances he hath given you. —The next motive is couched in the deſignations of Jacob and Iſrael, the names given to the illuſtrious patriarch from whom the people were lineally deſcended, to whom this diſcourſe was primarily directed. Your renowned progenitor conſtantly adhered to the worſhip of the true God, amidſt all the temptations and oppoſitions with which he contended. You, then, ſhew yourſelves worthy of ſuch a good anceſtor, and imitate the worthy example that he exhibited, of unalienable attachment to the ſervice of the living God—return without delay to the God of Iſrael, and ſerve him with all your heart, and with all your ſoul. In this manner juſtify the character which you bear, and manifeſt yourſelves the genuine poſterity of ſuch a father!—The third inducement to return to the Lord is expreſſed in theſe words, *Thou art my ſervant*, &c. And ought not a ſervant who hath fooliſhly, without cauſe, departed from his maſter, to return to the ſervice in which he ſolemnly engaged, and to which he is bound by the ſtrongeſt ties cloſely to adhere. I ſelected thee from among all the people of the earth, that thou mighteſt be to me a peculiar people, and ſerve me in holineſs and righteouſneſs all your days. For this very purpoſe I formed thee, that thou mighteſt be employed in executing my pleaſure. If you look for fruit from the tree that you planted, and from the fields that you cultivated, then I may certainly expect much

much ſervice from you, whom I have created, and on whom I have conferred many important benefits.—The fourth argument is contained in this gracious aſſurance, *Thou ſhalt not be forgotten of me.* In the time of temptation and diſtreſs, when the comfortable evidences of the divine favour are obſcured and not perceived, the church through deſpondency is apt to complain, 'O Lord, why doſt thou forget us 'for ever?' Such mournful expreſſions of diſtruſt, which are apt to drop from the lips of the dejected, ought to be cautiouſly avoided; the eternal truth which lies now before us ought never to be queſtioned. The acknowledgment made of old by the prophet Jeremiah may be adopted now with equal propriety, 'Iſrael hath not been forſaken, nor Judah, 'of his God, the Lord of hoſts *.' Though Iſrael may be often forgotten by other people, though they may be unmindful of the Rock of ſalvation, and deal falſely in his holy covenant; yet ſuch is his everlaſting kindneſs and faithfulneſs, that they are continually in his remembrance. Doubt not, then, of the paternal care of God's providence, or of his unchangeable veracity pledged in his promiſes.

22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and, as a cloud, thy ſins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

That no conſideration might be wanting to encourage ſpeedy return to God, two more arguments are ſubjoined, to enforce compliance with the exhortation. In the firſt is expreſſed God's forgiving mercy, whereby he pardons mens tranſgreſſions, remits their debts, and waſhes off the ſtains they have contracted. To give a juſt idea of this triumphant act of divine grace, God ſaith, *I have blotted out or done away as a thick cloud thy tranſgreſſions.*—In this elegant ſimilitude whereby the ſubject is illuſtrated, ſins are compared with great propriety to clouds

* Chap. li. 5.

clouds which intervene betwixt the ſun and the earth, obſcure the light of that glorious orb, obſtruct his luminous rays, and prevent their direct communication to the inhabitants of this globe. In like manner, iniquity ſeparates between God the Father of lights, and thoſe who offend him; and hinders the enjoyment of the refreſhing light of his countenance. Enormous ſins, like thick clouds which have a threatening aſpect, and portend ſome approaching tempeſt, expoſe to terrible ſtorms of divine vengeance; which are ready to burſt upon the guilty, and to overwhelm them in deſtruction.—All theſe treſpaſſes of his people, God ſaith he blots out, or takes away, even as a cloud ſuſpended in the air, that ſeldom continues long in one place. As the vapours whereof it is compoſed are ſoon diſſipated by the warming beams of the ſun, and quickly diſperſed by the winds, ſo that the leaſt veſtige of it cannot be perceived: In like manner, when the Lord ariſes to accompliſh the ſalvation of his people, he richly diſplays the benign influence of his grace, in cauſing all their iniquities to paſs away, in removing them out of his ſight, and putting them away as far as the eaſt is from the weſt.—Well doth it become us, with the royal poet, to celebrate the praiſes of Jehovah, whoſe mercies are very great toward them that fear him. In the ſtupendous vault of heaven, we contemplate a beautiful emblem of the immeaſurable height and boundleſs extent of that mercy which forgives all treſpaſſes.

Tranſgreſſions and ſins are both mentioned, which compriſe all manner of iniquity, whether greater or leſſer; to intimate the univerſal indemnity granted by Jehovah to thoſe on whom he confers this ineſtimable bleſſing. In pardoning his people, God freely forgives them all their ſins of every deſcription, flowing from corrupt propenſities and evil habits, committed through ignorance, infirmity, temptation, or preſumption. Words are therefore multiplied to expreſs the fulneſs of this bleſſing which he is pleaſed graciouſly to impart; in conſequence whereof they turn

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from dead idols to ſerve the living God. What a powerful motive to compliance with the following gracious invitation; their ſtate is happily changed and improved. The reviving intimation of the pardon of ſin diſmiſſes thoſe gloomy apprehenſions, perplexing fears, and dread of puniſhment which diſturbed the mind. All appears bright and ſerene, the light of God's countenance ſhines forth, comfort and joy ſpring up, hope that maketh not aſhamed is excited, and true felicity is enjoyed. O the bleſſedneſſes of the man (the Hebrew word in Pſalm xxxii. 1. is in the plural number) whoſe tranſgreſſions are forgiven, whoſe ſin is covered! What an accumulation of bleſſings are his portion whoſe iniquities are forgiven! How many good things concur to conſtitute his happineſs! He is truly bleſſed in ſoul and body, in this and the future world. Hearken then to the exhortation ſubjoined!

Return unto me. Be awakened to a deep ſenſe of your ſin and folly, in having turned to me the back and not the face; in having forſaken the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to yourſelves broken ciſterns that can hold no water; in loving and ſerving the creature more than the Creator. Forſake the fooliſh, and live and go in the way of underſtanding. Heartily renounce the idols that you have ſerved, and the wicked ways wherein you have gone, with juſt abhorrence of your doings, that have not been good. In the uſe of appointed means, and in humble dependance on my promiſed Spirit, caſt away all your tranſgreſſions wherein you have indulged, that involve men in deſtruction and perdition. Return unto me with all your hearts; that henceforth you may be employed in my worſhip, ſervice, and obedience, and cleave unto me, your Saviour and Lord, with full purpoſe of heart.—*For I have redeemed thee* from ſlavery in Egypt; from the hands of thy powerful enemies; and, according to my purpoſe, I will deliver thee from captivity at Babylon, as emblems of the great ſpiritual eternal redemption to be effected by the Meſſiah in the fulneſs of time, for all my peculiar

peculiar people, a ſubject often mentioned in this ſacred volume. Return unto God, and he will return unto you; he will have mercy upon you; he will heal your backſlidings, love you freely, and receive you graciouſly. He will make an everlaſting covenant with you, and not turn away from doing you good; he will open to you the treaſures of his grace, and enrich you with the precious bleſſings contained in his exceeding great and precious promiſes. Let every heart, then, reply, Turn thou me, O Lord, and I ſhall be turned.

23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it:* ſhout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into ſinging, ye mountains, O foreſt, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himſelf in Iſrael.

Tranſported with the view of the predicted events, Iſaiah calls upon the whole creation to ſing the praiſes of Jehovah, and to celebrate the great benefit of redemption. With this enlivening proſpect fully in his view, he invites the heavens, with all their innumerable orbs; the ſun, the great ſource of light, the moon that ſhines with a luſtre borrowed from his beams, and the ſtars which gliſter in the firmament by night, to teſtify their exultation and joy—Shout with the voice of triumph and gratitude ye lower parts of the earth, that are rendered fertile and pleaſant by celeſtial influences, and that are covered with corns, with vegetables, and animals of various deſcriptions.—Break forth into ſinging, ye mountains that are remarkable for elevation, beauty, and fruitfulneſs, and which are crowned with plenty—O foreſt, ye verdant lofty trees of every ſpecies, unite in the chorus of praiſe and thankſgiving to the glorious Redeemer of his people.—Such is the literal import of the words before us, which may be underſtood in their figurative ſenſe—By the heavens may be intended the celeſtial inhabitants, who are capable of celebrating with delight and joy

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the praiſes of Jehovah; namely, angels, with patriarchs, prophets, and ſaints, who lived under the Old Teſtament. The lower parts of the earth, may denote the humble ſtate of the Gentiles, who had not been exalted to ſuch high rank and diſtinguiſhing advantages as the mountains, which may ſignify thoſe who poſſeſſed greater eminence, higher privileges, and more extenſive influence. The foreſt with the trees thereof, may denote large cities and towns, in which were great numbers of people that had ariſen to conſiderable opulence, dignity, and authority. According to this interpretation, all theſe ſeveral claſſes of perſons are called to join in ſinging and ſhouting. In this bold figure, which hath an uncommon force of expreſſion; character, and action, are attributed to irrational inanimate objects. Our Prophet, inſpired with ardent gratitude to God, for the great mercies mentioned in the preceding verſe, addreſſes the heavens and the earth, as if animated with life, and capable of affection; or as the habitations of intelligent creatures, who are invited to magnify the Lord, for the benefits he confers upon his people.

For the Lord hath done it, &c. If you aſk what ground of joy and triumph could the deliverance of the poſterity of Jacob from captivity, afford to the inhabitants of heaven and earth? I anſwer, that the diſpoſition of all things depends entirely upon the purpoſe of God in Jeſus Chriſt, to be accompliſhed to his church. For the benefit of the people of God, by whom he is ſerved and glorified, the heavens and the earth, continue to this day, and ſhall remain until the conſummation of all things. The reſtoration of the Jewiſh people to the land of Canaan, was indiſpenſibly requiſite to the fulfilment of the promiſes made unto the fathers. According to the predictions of the prophets, the kingdom of Meſſiah muſt have been founded in Zion, and erected in Judea, whilſt the temple of Jeruſalem was ſtanding; and from thence it was to be extended over the whole earth. Theſe circumſtances, and others of equal

equal importance connected with them, could not have happened unleſs the children of Iſrael had been reſtored to their own land. In this event commenced the accompliſhment of the ancient prophecies, and the intimate union that was to ſubſiſt betwixt heaven and earth. Beſides every creature wherein is life, naturally deſires its preſervation; and as that depends on the exiſtence of the kingdom of the Son of God, which was to ariſe in the land of Judea, poſſeſſed by the Jews; the whole univerſe is required to celebrate with triumph their return into Paleſtine. By this auſpicious event, which God who is faithful hath effected, he exactly executed his intended work according to his promiſe; his conſummate excellencies were eminently exhibited, his name was highly glorified, and his people reſcued from captivity; ſo that this diſpenſation of Providence afforded much ground of gratitude and praiſe.—Let us then join in celebrating the ever enduring mercy of Jehovah, whereby the poſterity of Jacob were delivered from captivity and bondage, and ſettled in the inheritance promiſed to their fathers. Eſpecially let us extol and magnify the exceeding riches of his grace, whereby was accompliſhed the great redemption which was thus exhibited—The people of God reſcued from ſpiritual bondage and oppreſſion, and conducted through this world into the heavenly Canaan, the promiſed eternal inheritance reſerved for the ſaints in light.

24 Thus ſaith the LORD, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone; that ſpreadeth abroad the earth by myſelf;

The important ſubject here treated, is illuſtrated by a magnificent deſcription of the glorious Author by whom it was to be realized, in which he claims the moſt ſublime characters and intimate relations to his people. Thoſe mentioned in the firſt part of the

verſe, I lately conſidered, and ſhall not attempt at preſent to reſume or to add to what was ſaid on theſe topics. The frequent repetition of the comfortable truths aſſerted in this verſe, that God is the Redeemer of his people, and he that formed them in the earlieſt ſtate of their exiſtence, inculcates the high importance of maintaining a permanent ſenſe of our infinite obligations to him, for the bounties of his providence, and the riches of his mercy and grace. —*I am the Lord that maketh all things*; who created the heavens with all their hoſts; the earth, and all that is therein; the ſea, with its immenſe ſtores; and the land, with all its valuable productions—Who gave exiſtence to the eaſtern, ſouthern, weſtern, and northern regions of the univerſe; to time, and its ſeveral diſtributions into years and ſeaſons, months and weeks, days and nights—Who faſhioned the elegant ſtructure of the human body; which is fearfully and wonderfully made; and formed the ſpirit of man, that is within him, with all its noble powers and faculties. Matter, form, life of every ſort, are all entirely his production; not for the honour of another, but for his own pleaſure and glory; who hath abſolute underived independent right, to govern and diſpoſe of all that he hath made, as ſeemeth good in his ſight.—With the four and twenty elders, ought we to fall down before him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to worſhip him for ever and ever; ſaying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, 'and power; for thou haſt created all things, and 'for thy pleaſure they are and were created *.'

That ſtretcheth forth the heavens alone; which form a magnificent canopy over the whole earth, with all its innumerable inhabitants; enlightened and adorned by the celeſtial luminaries. This noble pavilion, was originally framed and furniſhed by its omnipotent Maker, with infinitely greater eaſe than man can conſtruct or pitch a tabernacle for his temporary reſidence.—*That ſpreadeth abroad the earth*

by

* Rev. iv. 11.

by myſelf. As a tent or curtain is extended at pleaſure, by unfolding the parts whereof it is compoſed; ſo Jehovah ſpread forth the earth into the ſhape and ſize he purpoſed to form it. He diſpoſed and adjuſted the various materials whereof it is conſtituted, diſperſing throughout the vaſt body, the rocks, the minerals, the metals, the waters; covering them with a ſoil adapted to the vegetation of plants and trees, of herbs and corns, requiſite to the ſuſtenance and comfort of man and beaſt; ſuited to give the ſurface a richly diverſified appearance, to excite admiration and delight. All theſe things the Lord God did alone and by himſelf, without the concurrence or aid of any perſon whatever. There was none who cooperated with him, and aſſiſted him in forming any part of the immenſe fabrick of creation. He needed not, and employed not, any foreign aid; ſo that none have right to claim, or ſhare with him in the praiſe and glory which are due ſolely to him. As he alone is Jehovah and beſides him there is no God, ſo he alone made the heavens and the earth.—Attentively contemplate the wonderful works of God, to which there are none that can be equalled, that glorioufly diſplay his divine attributes, and afford an excellent commentary upon the holy ſcriptures. Conſider their grandeur, their number, their diſtances, their diverſity, and their deſign; and you may perceive convincing evidence of his exiſtence and perfections. This character of Creator he here aſſumes, to remind his people of his conſummate ability to reſcue them from captivity at Babylon, whereby he was to give an illuſtrious diſplay of his grace, power, veracity, and care of their intereſts.

25 That fruſtrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wiſe *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge fooliſh;

About the time of the reſtoration of the Jews from he

the land of Aſſyria, the Medes and Perſians carried on war againſt the Babylonians, whoſe aſtrologers, diviners, and ſoothſayers, foretold that the war was to terminate in their favour; that the empire was to flouriſh, and for a long period to enjoy proſperity. The follies and abſurdities of all theſe claſſes of pretended wiſe men, were to be expoſed to contempt and ſcorn. The Hebrew word here tranſlated liars, ſignifies that order of men who, ſequeſtering themſelves from commerce with ſociety, were employed in contemplating things ſacred, in conjecturing and foretelling future events. The tokens or ſigns on which they founded their prognoſtications were the aſpect of the ſky, the appearance of the heavenly bodies, the poſition of the inwards of beaſts or fowls, and other uncertain circumſtances; whereby they pretended to determine the fate of individuals and nations. Theſe devices God, according to his pleaſure, fruſtrates and makes of no effect.—*And maketh diviners mad.* Diviners, as diſtinguiſhed from thoſe above mentioned, were perſons who alledged, that by means of intercourſe with dæmons, and the ſpirits of the dead, and by certain ſacrifices and incantations, they could diſcover and foretel things ſecret and future, and avert impending calamities. This art of divination was much practiſed by the Chaldeans and other eaſtern nations, and ſeems to have been uſed among the Jews in the days of Ahaz king of Judah*. Perſons of this character God ſometimes renders ſo perplexed and diſtracted, that they know not what to do; they appear like men utterly deprived of reaſon and judgment.—*That turneth wiſe men backward.* By the wiſe men may be intended philoſophers and other adepts in natural ſcience, who poſſeſſed great ſagacity, a penetrating genius, extenſive knowledge, artful contrivance, and large experience; and on theſe accounts were much reſpected, and reſorted to for inſtruction. Theſe perſons the Almighty when he ſees proper expoſes to public ſhame, by converting

* Hoſ. iv. 12.

ing the knowledge whereof they boaſted into a ground of diſgrace, and making it to appear no better than egregious folly. In this manner are verified the words of the Pſalmiſt, 'The Lord bringeth the counſel of the heathen to nought, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect *. Some remarkable inſtances of this ſort are recorded in ſcripture; as of the magicians and wiſe men of Egypt, and the diviners and ſoothſayers of Babylon. Theſe acts of omnipotence are the glorious prerogative of Jehovah, and afford a ſtriking proof of the divinity of the God of Iſrael.

26 That confirmeth the word of his ſervant, and performeth the counſel of his meſſengers; that ſaith to Jeruſalem, Thou ſhalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye ſhall be built, and I will raiſe up the decayed places thereof:

Jehovah demonſtrates that he is the true God, not only by fruſtrating the artifices of thoſe who make the higheſt pretenſions to diſcernment and wiſdom, but alſo by verifying the predictions of his ſervants. So firmly perſuaded was our Prophet of the fulfilment of his prophecy, though it was not to be accompliſhed for a conſiderable period of time, that he ſpeaks as if it had been already done. Iſaiah, who clearly predicted the event to which he primarily referred, ſeems to have been the ſervant of Jehovah eſpecially intended. This is the honourable character given to him, to Moſes, to David, with many others who were appropriated to the ſervice of God, and aſſiduouſly employed in their great Maſter's work, whom they ſerved with their ſpirits and with pure conſciences.—*And performeth the counſel of his meſſengers*, thoſe eminent men who were ſent by him to publiſh his mind to his church, to make known to them the way

* Pſalm xxxiii. 10.

way of ſalvation, and to announce the advent of his Son into the world in the fulneſs of time. The doctrine, compriſing predictions, promiſes, and threatenings, which they delivered in the name and by the command of the everlaſting God, Jehovah never fails to ratify, eſtabliſh, and fulfil. Though there may be a peculiar reference in the words before us to the edict of Cyrus king of Perſia reſpecting the building of the houſe of God at Jeruſalem, they contain a general important truth worthy of attentive conſideration. As the law of God is ſaid to be made void by the tranſgreſſions of men, and to be eſtabliſhed by producing its proper effect, univerſal obedience; in like manner the promiſes and threatenings recorded in the word of God are confirmed by their exact fulfilment. Every event that happens according to the predictions of ſcripture affords a new proof of its certainty, a remarkable confirmation of its truth. The accompliſhment of one part gives aſſurance that the whole ſhall be verified in due ſeaſon. Thus the fulfilment of the promiſe made to Abraham, that God would make of him a great nation, that he would bleſs him, make his name great, and give the land of Canaan to his poſterity: And of that made to David, that he would eſtabliſh his kingdom, and of the fruit of his loins according to the fleſh he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit upon his throne, atteſts the truth of the word of God. What indeed are all the operations of divine providence and grace toward nations, churches, and individuals, but proofs that the ſcriptures were written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, and of the divinity of the doctrines publiſhed by the meſſengers of heaven?—Conſider then, brethren, if the teſtimony of God hath been confirmed in you. Hath God fulfilled in you all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power? hath he given you new hearts and right ſpirits? hath he rectified your judgments? hath he enlightened your underſtandings? hath he awakened your conſcien-

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ces, and regulated your affections, and thus given you to experience the veracity of his word, when accompanied with the demonſtration of the Spirit and with power? If in this manner it hath been confirmed to you with theſe ſigns and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; the propoſition here affirmed will be eſtabliſhed by the moſt ſatisfying evidence that you could deſire.

That ſaith to Jeruſalem &c. The metropolis of Judea, ſituated on mount Zion, beautified by the magnificient temple built for the worſhip of Jehovah, encompaſſed by walls and towers of conſiderable ſtrength. Glorious things which I ſtay not to recite were ſpoken of this city of God, this joy of the whole earth, in whoſe palaces God was known for a refuge. Notwithſtanding the many ſignal privileges enjoyed by the inhabitants of this once highly favoured city, ſuch were the atrocious crimes and abominable wickedneſs, wherein its inhabitants obſtinately perſiſted, that their tranſgreſſions exceeded thoſe of Sodom and Gomorrah. God therefore ſent againſt them the Aſſyrians who ſtript them of their riches, deprived them of their children, burnt their habitations, their city and temple, and carried them away captive out of their own land, after having been reduced to the greateſt ſtraits by famine. Theſe calamities however were to come to a period at the time determined; and God who never fails to verify the word of his ſervants declares, 'thou ſhalt be inhabited, and to the other cities of Judah, ye ſhall be 'built.' Accordingly it came to paſs after the return of the Jewiſh people from captivity at Babylon, Jeruſalem and their other cities were rebuilt and repeopled. Thus was fulfilled the remarkable predictions relative to this memorable event, particularly that delivered by Jeremiah, chap. xxx. 18, *et ſeq.* 'Thus 'ſaith the Lord, Behold I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city ſhall be builded on her 'own heap, and the palace ſhall remain after the manner

'manner thereof. And out of them ſhall proceed the 'voice of thankſgiving,' &c.

27 That ſaith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.

Another diſplay of the omnipotence of the God of Iſrael is ſpecified in theſe words. The deep is intended to denote the waters of the large river Euphrates, which flowed through the city of Babylon. In order to poſſeſs himſelf of this ſtrongly fortified city, which was deemed impregnable, on account of the thickneſs and height of its walls, Cyrus effected by the following ſtratagem. He employed his army to cut a new channel for the river, by which its waters were conveyed into a vaſt lake of forty miles ſquare. The courſe of the river being changed where it ran thro' the city, the channel, which was rendered almoſt dry, opened a paſſage for this illuſtrious prince and his army, whereby they entered the city by night. This arduous enterpriſe is aſcribed to the command of Jehovah, having been executed by his direction and authority, who turneth rivers of water into a dry place. Thus did the Lord God of Iſrael dry up the rivers, and make way for the Medes and Perſians to ſeize upon the riches of Babylon, and to deprive that great city of its power and government, with all thoſe immenſe treaſures which it poſſeſſed.

28 That ſaith to Cyrus, *He is* my ſhepherd, and ſhall perform all my pleaſure: even ſaying to Jeruſalem, Thou ſhalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation ſhall be laid.

The perſon who was deſtined by the purpoſe and providence of God to execute this arduous work is here expreſsly mentioned by the name of Cyrus, which, according to an ancient tradition, ſignifies the Sun. This illuſtrious prince was the ſon of Cambyſes king of Perſia, and of Mandana daughter of Aſtyages king

king of Media; and educated in the manner of the Perſians, who trained their children to endure fatigue and hardſhips. Poſſeſſed of an elegant graceful perſon, and of the moſt amiable diſpoſitions, he ſoon became the object of general admiration and eſteem. In his youth he diſtinguiſhed himſelf above his contemporaries by docility, courage, obedience, patience, and a happy facility of performing every thing in which he engaged. In early life he was promoted, with univerſal approbation, by his uncle Cyaxeres, king of Media, to the command of his army. This high ſtation he occupied with great celebrity and ſucceſs in the war with the Babylonians; and as the reward of his eminent ſervices, he obtained in marriage the only daughter of the Median monarch. Being elevated to the empire of Media and Perſia, he diſplayed all thoſe noble qualities which are requiſite to form a great man. He was temperate, wiſe, valiant, humane, magnanimous; and before he went forth to any arduous enterpriſe, he implored the direction and protection of the gods. Endowed with a fine genius, and the utmoſt firmneſs of mind, and poſſeſſed of the wonderful art of gaining peoples affections, and managing their tempers, he was capapable of the greateſt military exertions, and of executing the moſt hazardous deſigns. In few words, Cyrus ſhone forth with peculiar luſtre and dignity, in every ſphere of action; and his life was adorned with all thoſe lovely virtues, which attract eſteem and affection. With all theſe admirable accompliſhments, and extraordinary abilities, he was furniſhed by Jehovah; that he might be the inſtrument of executing his gracious purpoſes relative to his people.

He is my ſhepherd, (ſaith God) who ſhall conduct my people into their own paſtures in the land of Canaan; take care of their intereſts, and advance their proſperity. To this important office, I have appointed and called him; and for the execution of it, he is in every reſpect qualified. The words of Cyrus on

this ſubject are truly remarkable, and ſerve to illuſtrate the character here given of him. Diſcourſing with his courtiers as to the duties of a king; he obſerved, that a prince ought to act the part of a ſhepherd toward his flock; watching over them, that they may live in ſafety; taking charge of them, that they may be exempted from cares; removing whatever is hurtful to them, and chooſing whatever is ſalutary—That he ſhould take pleaſure in ſeeing them increaſe and proſper, and in their defence valiantly expoſe himſelf to danger. Such were the noble ſentiments delivered by the illuſtrious prince, concerning whom God declares, He is my ſhepherd—*Even ſaying to Jeruſalem, Thou ſhalt be built*, &c. Though in the royal proclamation iſſued by Cyrus, recorded 2 Chr. xxxvi. 22. in conſequence of which this prediction was verified; the rebuilding of Jeruſalem is not expreſsly mentioned, yet it is plainly ſuppoſed; for had not that city exiſted, the edict could not have ſaid that the Lord God of heaven had charged the king of Perſia, to build him a houſe in *Jeruſalem* which is in Judah. Beſides, the rebuilding of Jeruſalem was made a ground of complaint to Artaxerxes the king, by his ſervants, who informed him 'that the Jews 'who came from thee to us, are come unto Jeruſa-'lem, building the rebellious and bad city, and have 'ſet up the walls, and joined the foundations*.' Both parts then of the prediction before us were exactly fulfilled, in conſequence of the proclamation made by Cyrus, whom God had appointed to be his ſhepherd.—As God is gracious in the promiſes that he gives to his people, ſo he is faithful in accompliſhing them in due ſeaſon. Whilſt the Jews were detained in hard bondage at Babylon, and ſtrictly prohibited from departing that country, their deliverance, and the reſtoration of the cities of Judah to their former proſperity, ſeemed moſt improbable. No obſtacle or oppoſition, however, could have hindered the fulfilment of theſe predicted events. Had their enemies not

* Ezra iv. 12.

not only forbid their departure, and the rebuilding of their city and temple; but bound them in fetters, caſt them into dungeons, and planted over them the ſtrongeſt guards, they could not have prevented the promiſed reſtoration. The wiſeſt human policy, the greateſt human exertions, could not have fruſtrated the counſel of Jehovah: no created wiſdom or ſtrength could have counteracted his deſign, in whoſe hand there is power and might—To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

PRELI,

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

IN the ſecond ſection of this prophetic diſcourſe, contained in the chapter on which we now enter, the Lord God of Iſrael declares at great length, his purpoſe of employing Cyrus king of Perſia, to overthrow the Babylonian empire; that he might accompliſh his gracious deſigns toward his peculiar people, and give check to the murmurings of thoſe who maligned the ways of Providence. By this memorable event, and its joyful conſequences, Jehovah clearly demonſtrated, that he is the Governor among the nations; that idolatry is altogether vain and abſurd; and therefore that people of every region ought to comply with his gracious invitation, to come and participate of the righteouſneſs and ſalvation of the Son of God.—The Lord God of heaven and earth is introduced addreſſing Cyrus, to whom the oration is directed, all nations are invited to draw near and attend to this ſubject; and the chorus, repreſenting the church of God, expreſs their cordial approbation of the ways of Providence. Our Prophet begins by announcing the purpoſe of Jehovah, of giving to the Perſian monarch the dominion of the eaſt; of employing him to overturn the Babylonian monarchy; and by ſtating the reaſons of his determinate counſel relative to this matter, ver. 1—5.—Some of the great deſigns which were to be effected by this momentous event, and the happy conſequences that were to reſult from it, whereby thoſe who traduced divine diſpenſations were to be confounded, are then brought into view, 6—10.—The God of Iſrael again proceeds to vindicate his own honour, as the Creator and Governor of the world, in aſſigning this ſervice to Cyrus; by ſhewing farther joyful effects which were to accompany the execution of this arduous work, v. 11—14.—The chorus, repreſenting the church of God, are then brought forward celebrating the perfections

ſections and providence of Jehovah, diſplayed in the eternal ſalvation of his people, v. 15—17.—After which God eſtabliſhes the truth of his divinity, from the prediction of this glorious work, and reproves the folly of idolaters, v. 18—21.—The chapter concludes with a gracious invitation to all the people of the earth, to come and ſhare in the righteouſneſs and redemption of the Meſſiah; and to believe in him to whom every knee ſhall bow, and every tongue confeſs, v. 22—25.

CHAP. XLV.

THUS ſaith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whoſe right hand I have holden, to ſubdue nations before him; and I will looſe the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates ſhall not be ſhut.

With this ſolemn introduction commences the following copious declaration of the divine purpoſe, reſpecting the conqueſts of Cyrus, who is here dignified with the title of the Lord's anointed. The character hath an obvious alluſion to the ancient practice of anointing thoſe who were inveſted with royal majeſty and authority. Of this cuſtom ſeveral inſtances occur in ſcripture hiſtory, which I ſtay not to recite. The expreſſion may import that God had appointed the Perſian monarch, to be the inſtrument of deſtroying the Babylonian empire, and of reſtoring his people to liberty, and to their own land; and that he had endowed him with abilities requiſite for the execution of the important ſervice to which he was deſtined.—*Whoſe right hand I have holden.* Cyrus is here addreſſed as if he had actually exiſted at the time

time this prophecy was delivered, though he did not flouriſh until about 170 years after this period. A ſignal proof of his perfect foreknowledge, who calls the things that are not as though they were, and to whom all his works are known from the beginning. The words here uſed in relation to this prince, plainly intimate, that the Almighty would uphold, ſtrengthen, and direct him in fulfilling his pleaſure, and conduct him ſafely through the hazardous enterpriſe wherein he was to engage.—*To ſubdue nations before him*, and to bring them into ſubjection to his authority. Theſe extenſive conqueſts the Perſian monarch, in his royal proclamation I lately mentioned, aſcribed to the interpoſition of the Lord God of heaven, who gave him, as he acknowledged, all the kingdoms of the earth.—*And I will looſe the loins of kings*. The monarchs of eaſtern nations were accuſtomed anciently to wear girdles about their loins, which were conſidered as giving ſtrength and firmneſs to their bodies; and being richly decorated, ſerved as badges of royal dignity. When, therefore, God declares that he would deprive them of their girdles, and looſe their loins, the expreſſion imports, that he would diveſt them of their power and majeſty, and reduce them to a mean and contemptible condition. This prediction was remarkably verified in the Aſiatic princes, who were ſtruck with terror at the victories of Cyrus, and by him ſtript of their thrones and kingdoms.—*To open before him the two-leaved gates*, &c. The gates of fortified cities, eſpecially thoſe of Babylon, are, I ſuppoſe, chiefly intended. The gates of that city, leading from the ſtreets to the river, were providentially left open in the general diſorder, occaſioned by the great feaſt celebrated at the time Cyrus's forces entered the city by night, through the channel of the Euphrates. And the gates of the palace were raſhly opened, to enquire what was the cauſe of the tumult without, when the Perſian and Median ſoldiers ruſhed in and took poſſeſſion

poſſeſſion of the royal reſidence. Thus was accompliſhed what is here foretold.

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places ſtraight: I will break in pieces the gates of braſs, and cut in ſunder the bars of iron.

Farther encouraging aſſurances are given to the perſon, who was honoured with the deſignation of the Anointed of the Lord.—*I will go before thee*, ſaith God, to make my way plain before thy face, to remove obſtructions, to conduct thee ſucceſsfully thro' thy marches and enterpriſes, and to crown thy exertions with certain conqueſt and victory.—*And make the crooked places ſtraight.* All the impediments which might retard or hinder thy career to triumph and renown, ſhall be taken out of the way, by the interpoſition of my providence; in conſequence whereof thy work ſhall become eaſy and proſperous.—*I will break in pieces the gates of braſs*, &c. The ſpacious gates of Babylon are ſaid to have been made of ſolid braſs, and ſecured by large iron bars. Theſe ſtrongly fortified gates Jehovah declared he would entirely demoliſh, to open a paſſage for this great prince and his army, into the palaces and the interior parts of that great city, which was deemed impregnable by human art and ſtrength.

3 And I will give thee the treaſures of darkneſs, and hidden riches of ſecret places, that thou mayeſt know, that I the LORD, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Iſrael.

The immenſe ſtores of rich men are commonly depoſited in obſcure hidden places, where they are ſuppoſed to be ſafeſt, and leaſt endangered by the hand of fraud and violence. The vaſt abundance of precious things, which had been ſecretly laid up and ſecured by their opulent poſſeſſors, wherever conceal-

ed,

ed, God, the ſovereign Lord of all, declares that he was to give to the king of Perſia. This aſſurance was fully verified; for the Moſt High did indeed give into his hands, the vaſt riches of many kingdoms in Aſia, which have been eſtimated at one hundred and twenty millions, two hundred and twenty four thouſand pounds Sterling *. The Lord God gave him the treaſures of Babylon, that certainly were very great, and the wealth of Crœſus, who was rich to a proverb, and celebrated beyond all the kings of that age for his opulence. This prince delivered up his riches to Cyrus, with an account of the particulars with which every waggon was loaded.—The prediction and the accompliſhment of this remarkable circumſtance, were intended to convey this important leſſon to the Perſian monarch—*That thou mayeſt know that I the Lord*, &c. That thou mayeſt be fully ſatisfied that Jehovah, who appointed, and called, and employed thee in this ſervice, and determined all the events which thou art to effect, is the God of Iſrael. Of this momentous truth he ſeems to have been perſuaded, in the edict which he publiſhed relative to the rebuilding of the houſe of God at Jeruſalem.—Indeed the various ſurpriſing diſpenſations of providence are deſigned to inſtruct men, that verily there is a God who ruleth on the earth, and who giveth the kingdoms thereof to whomſoever he will. This plain truth we ought to learn from thoſe events, which clearly evince that God alone giveth men power to get wealth; and that riches and honour come of him.

4 For Jacob my ſervant's ſake, and Iſrael mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have ſurnamed thee, though thou haſt not known me.

The reaſons are here ſpecified why the God of Iſrael nominated this heathen prince, who was ignorant of his exiſtence and perfections, to execute this arduous

* Brerewood de Ponderibus, ch. x.

arduous work; why he honoured him with ſo many marks of his favour, and crowned his efforts with ſucceſs. The firſt reaſon aſſigned for this diſpenſation is taken from the gracious regard which God diſcovered for the poſterity of Iſrael, his peculiar people, who were very cruelly treated, and greatly oppreſſed by the king of Babylon. To inflict righteous vengeance on the prince and his people, who grievouſly maltreated his ſervants, God raiſed up Cyrus, and granted him the commiſſion mentioned in the former verſes. The other reaſon is deduced from the neceſſity of this meaſure; to obtain the deliverance of God's choſen people from captivity and ſervitude, to reſtore them to liberty and their own land, and give uſeful inſtruction reſpecting the government of God to the nations of the earth. For theſe purpoſes—*I have even called thee even by thy name*, and expreſsly appointed thee, and qualified thee to perform the ſervice to which thou art deſtined by my purpoſe.

I have ſurnamed thee, &c. I have particularly characterized thee, and pointed out thy country, family, and deſignation; and I have endowed thee with thoſe gifts and abilities that are requiſite for accompliſhing the peculiar work wherein you are to be employed. The God of Iſrael was pleaſed to inveſt him with all the power and dignity to which he was elevated; though ignorant to whom he was indebted for theſe important benefits.—Notwithſtanding the Perſians entertained juſter notions of God than the other heathen nations, it appears from the expreſſion here uſed, and repeated in the verſe that immediately follows, that the object of religious worſhip in Perſia, was not the ſame with that of the Jews. The Perſians profeſſed to believe in an eternal ſelf-exiſtent God, with whoſe immenſity and omnipreſence they were ſo penetrated, that they eſteemed it a ſort of impiety to erect temples to his ſervice, which they ſuppoſed conveys the idea of locality. They were therefore moſt proper inſtruments to inflict the judgments of God upon a people addicted to the groſſeſt

idolatry. And their illuſtrious prince, who for long time was inſenſible that the true God admirably furniſhed him for this buſineſs, and employed him to execute his pleaſure, afterward aſcribed to him the glory he acquired.

5 ¶ I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none elſe, *there is* no god beſide me: I girded thee, though thou haſt not known me:

With what majeſty and authority doth the living God aſſert his ſupreme divinity and ſovereign dominion! With what ſimplicity and dignity doth he announce to the world the important truth here affirmed, which he demonſtrates by all the wonderful operations of his providence; and which, if believed, would baniſh idolatry from the earth, and ſubſtitute in its place the worſhip of the Moſt High, whoſe name alone is Jehovah.—*I am the Lord*, the ſelf-exiſtent, all-ſufficient God; the Creator, the Preſerver, the Proprietor, and Diſpoſer of all perſons and events. —*And there is none elſe*, in heaven or in earth, that is worthy to be compared to him; who at all times, and in all places, doeth whatſoever ſeemeth good in his ſight—*I girded thee*. The gods that Cyrus knew and worſhipped, did not prepare him for entering on the expeditions in which he embarked; they did not give him ſtrength and ſkill for the battle; nor was he in any meaſure obliged to them for victory and ſucceſs. For all theſe things he was indebted to the God of Iſrael, who girded him for the war, and rendered him proſperous in the moſt hazardous atchievements.

6 That they may know from the riſing of the ſun, and from the weſt, that *there is* none beſide me, I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none elſe.

The important deſign for which God foretold and accompliſhed

accompliſhed the events above mentioned, is particularly ſpecified in theſe words.—Whilſt the Jews were detained in captivity at Babylon, they beheld the exact fulfilment of ſome of the predictions delivered by Iſaiah and the other prophets of the Lord; and had placed fully in their view the moſt convincing evidences of the divinity of the God of their fathers. The Babylonians, and the other nations with whom they had intercourſe, had alſo exhibited before them, by the deliverance of the Jewiſh people from captivity, ſtriking proofs that the Lord is God, and the beſt means of bringing them to the acknowledgment of this momentous truth. The inhabitants of remote kingdoms informed of this event, would naturally be induced to enquire concerning the Lord God of Iſrael, who ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed himſelf above all the gods of the nations; what kind of religion the Jews profeſſed, and wherein it excelled that of other people. Such inquiries as would ſpontaniouſly ariſe from the above mentioned extraordinary events, opened the way for bringing many, in diſtant lands, in both the eaſtern and weſtern regions of the earth, to the knowledge and belief of the only true God. Thus one great end was attained; to effect which, God anointed, enriched, called, and girded for war the Perſian monarch.

7 I form the light and create darkneſs: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all theſe *things*.

What a magnificent deſcription, well adapted to the preſent occaſion, doth Jehovah give of his omnipotence. The Perſians among whom Cyrus was educated, maintained that there were two ſupreme independent cauſes; the one, the Author of good, the other of evil to mankind, who were repreſented by their proper emblems, light and darkneſs. In reference to this abſurd opinion, Jehovah aſſerts by the Prophet, in the moſt ſignificant terms, his eternal

ternal power and Godhead, and explicitly affirms, that the light and the darkneſs, are his creatures ordained and permitted to execute his wiſe purpoſes. —*I form the light.* When I created the heavens and the earth, I commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs; I ſaid let there be light, and there was light. I made two great lights; the greater to rule the day, and the leſſer to rule the night: I made the ſtars alſo, and ſet them in the firmament of heaven, to give light upon the earth. The day is mine, the night alſo is mine; I have prepared the light, and the ſun, which are cheering and comfortable to the children of men; which ſhew them their work, and how it ought to be performed, whilſt they exhibit the excellence and the beauties of creation. I form not only the natural light, but every thing that comes under the deſcription of light. I create the light of proſperity, which brings people into view, and renders them conſpicuous on account of their wealth and power; which cheers their ſpirits, and affords agreeable opportunity of performing the various ſervices incumbent upon them—I make the light of the ſpiritual world, the ſun of righteouſneſs, to ariſe with healing under his wings, that he may enlighten the Gentiles, and be the glory of my people Iſrael—That he may illuminate the world by his doctrine, Spirit, and example; by the miniſtry of his ſervants, and the lives of his diſciples, who walk as children of light. And I irradiate the minds of my peculiar people, who are made light in the Lord, and cauſe them to ſhine forth as lights in the world.—Well doth it become us to acknowledge with gratitude the ſovereign mercy of God the Lord, who hath ſhewed us light; whilſt the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of ignorance and cruelty, and the worſhip of idols. He ſends the light of the knowledge of his glory to one place, and not to another. Some countries, which for ages were covered with darkneſs, he hath viſited with the light of the goſpel; others, which had long enjoyed that light, are now

lying

lying in darkneſs. By the former diſpenſation, he diſplays his rich mercy; by the latter, his righteous judgment.

And create darkneſs, which in the literal ſenſe, is occaſioned by the departure of the ſun in the firmament, and the abſence of natural light. This ſtated return of darkneſs, which regularly follows the privation of light, is the effect of my creating power and wiſe appointment.—I (ſaith the Lord) create the darkneſs of affliction, calamity and ſorrow, which render the condition of men uncomfortable and diſtreſſing. Involved in adverſity they fall into obſcurity, and ſuch a ſeaſon proves to them a time of wrath, of trouble, and diſtreſs; a day of waſteneſs and deſolation, a day of darkneſs and gloomineſs, a day of clouds and thick darkneſs.—I create the darkneſs of inward diſtreſs and dejection in the minds of men, by withdrawing the light of my word, the inſtructions of my ſervants, and the enlivening influences of my ſpirit, in conſequence whereof ſpiritual light is turned into obſcurity. This darkneſs the Lord God produces in his adorable providence, as the juſt puniſhment of the contempt and abuſe of the light he had afforded.—Both light and darkneſs are entirely at his diſpoſal, who appoints them their ſeveral times and places, and by this glorious prerogative he is diſtinguiſhed from the idols honoured by blinded nations. Good of every kind, and all that is compriſed in darkneſs comes from God, though oft times conveyed by the operation of ſecond cauſes. Convinced that all our felicity and all our troubles are ordered by him who hath ordained the revolutions of light and darkneſs; let us acknowledge his ſupreme hand in every condition whether joyful or ſorrowful, and ſtudy to improve every circumſtance, whether proſperous or adverſe. *I make peace.* I grant deliverance both from outward and inward diſturbance to individuals and nations; and confer upon them that accumulation of bleſſings, which are neceſſary to the enjoyment of tranquillity and happineſs.

neſs. I am the giver of that peace which includes all manner of proſperity. I cauſe hoſtilities to ceaſe among ſtates and kingdoms; I ſet them free from foreign war and domeſtic feuds, from contention and tumult, and eſtabliſh deſirable concord and good agreement. I make that ſacred peace whereby thoſe who were enemies to me in their minds and by wicked works, are reconciled through the promiſed Meſſiah who is their peace. I reſtore their ſouls to order and ſerenity, and convey to them peace that paſſeth all underſtanding, to keep their hearts and minds. Thus I keep them in perfect peace whoſe minds are ſtayed upon me, becauſe they truſt in me. I grant tranquillity to the churches of the ſaints, by ſuppreſſing thoſe turbulent paſſions which excite ſtrife and confuſion, by beſtowing, and bringing into action thoſe good diſpoſitions which incline men to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace, and to follow peace with people of every deſcription.—'Now the 'Lord of peace himſelf, give you peace always by all 'means: The Lord be with you all. *'

And create evil. Though the conſummate rectitude and infinite purity of Jehovah, clearly evince the abſolute impoſſibility that God is the author of ſin or moral evil; yet from ſcripture and from facts, it is evident that he preſerves tranſgreſſors in exiſtence, that he does not effectually hinder them from committing iniquity, which in the courſe of his adminiſtration he renders ſubſervient to ſome valuable purpoſes. Though he neither conſtrains nor inclines any one to the practice of evil, but on the contrary withholds from ſin, and denounces againſt it the moſt awful threatenings; yet having permitted it to exiſt among mankind, he on that account ſpeaks of it as entirely under his controul and at his diſpoſal; who cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.—The evil of affliction, which is the natural and juſt conſequence of tranſgreſſion, I ſuppoſe is here chiefly intended. The prophet Amos inquires

* 2 Theſſ. iii. 16.

quires 'Shall there be evil in the city and the Lod hath not done it? I reply ſurely, not.' Do you aſk, How is this anſwer conſiſtent with the righteouſneſs, the holineſs, the mercy, and other perfections of Jehovah. Afflictions are nominal evils, but in reality they prove uſeful and ſalutary; they manifeſt the glory of God's divine excellencies; they promote the beſt intereſts of his people; they are neceſſary to the government of the world in its preſent ſtate; they check the progreſs of wickedneſs, and ſhew the dreadful conſequences of incurring the wrath of the Almighty. In this view, how majeſtic, how authoritative are theſe words, I create evil! I ſend forth the lightenings and the thunders, the froſts and the ſnows, the winds and the rains; whether for correction or mercy to the individual or to the land. I command the ſword to devour, the peſtilence to deſtroy, the famine to conſume, the fire to waſte, the waters to overthrow, and the enemy to ravage and lead into captivity. From me diſeaſes and death receive their commiſſion, by me they are directed where and to whom they ſhall go; they ſeize upon the wicked as the juſt puniſhment of their ſins, and to the righteous they are part of the neceſſary diſcipline of their father's family.—*I the Lord do all theſe things*, according to my ſovereign pleaſure, in the beſt manner, at the moſt proper ſeaſons, and to accompliſh the moſt important purpoſes.

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the ſkies pour down righteouſneſs: let the earth open, and let them bring forth ſalvation, and let righteouſneſs ſpring up together. I the LORD have created it.

Theſe words remarkable for beauty and ſublimity, may be conſidered as expreſſing the ſovereign command of Jehovah, or the earneſt requeſt of the church. They are evidently hyperbolical and contain a fine ſentiment, an elegant figure of peculiar excellence that

that ſeldom occurs in ſcripture. They repreſent in ſplended terms according to the primary ſenſe, the joyful conſequences of the reſtoration of Judah from captivity to their own land, abounding in peace and plenty. In the more recondite myſtical ſenſe under this oſtenſible image, they exhibit the happier ſtate of the church, enjoying the bleſſings of the Meſſiah's redemption, and flouriſhing in holineſs and righteouſneſs—and completely comprehending both, they may be diſtinctly referred to either. The imagery of nature being equally ſuited to expreſs ideas of human and divine things; it admits of a degree of ambiguity eſſential to this kind of figure. Through the whole of the verſe there is an uncommon elevation of language, a brilliancy of metaphor, intimating that ſomething of a moſt important nature lies concealed within, into which the prophet would have us to penetrate. How forcible, how diverſified, how admirable the compoſition which we proceed to develope.

Drop down ye heavens from above, &c. This fervent prayer of the church, or ſupreme divine command intimates, that during the time the Jews were in captivity at Babylon the heavens had been ſhut; the bleſſings of righteouſneſs and ſalvation, which are the effects of the kind providence and favour of God, had been reſtrained, and were ſcarcely viſible, whilſt the inhabitants of the earth were not diſpoſed to receive them. The appearance of things however was to be entirely changed, and to aſſume a different aſpect under the auſpicious reign of Cyrus, a prince celebrated for his generoſity and equity. Under his government juſtice with all manner of proſperity, which ſeemed to have forſaken the earth were to flouriſh. The faithfulneſs of God was to be diſplayed in fulfilling his promiſes, juſt retribution was to be diſpenſed to his people by their deliverance from captivity, and reſtoration to liberty; and righteous deſerved vengeance was to be inflicted on their enemies. Theſe important benefits were to be thankfully received by the inhabitants of the earth, among whom ſhould

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ſpring up large abundance of precious fruits, whereby the mercy and power of Jehovah were to be glorioufly manifeſted. This, if I miſtake not, ſeems to be the primary import of the words; which I ſuppoſe ought chiefly to be conſidered in their ſpiritual ſenſe, that falls next to be inveſtigated.

The heavens and the ſkies which are here addreſſed, may denote, in this view, the celeſtial repoſitories from whence God conveys to his people the bleſſings of his grace, in conſequence whereof ſpiritual ſalvation flouriſhes among them—The ſacred treaſures of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, with every benefit contained in the unſearchable riches of the Son of God, which are communicated by the Holy Spirit to enlighten, ſanctify, and beautify the minds of men according to the divine good pleaſure.—By the righteouſneſs which the heavens are requeſted, or commanded to pour upon the earth, may be meant the righteouſneſs of God which is by faith of Jeſus Chriſt, that is unto all and upon all them that believe. Through the perfect obedience of the great Meſſiah, who is emphatically denominated, 'The Lord our 'righteouſneſs,' ſalvation flows to mankind, with abundance of grace which reigns and brings under law to him, who ſaith in ver. 22. 'Look unto 'me and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth.' The empire of grace diſplays to higheſt advantage the juſtice of God; it produces righteouſneſs in men, and terminates in eternal life.—*Let the earth open*, &c. Let the inhabitants of the earth, whether Jews or Gentiles, be prepared under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by faith and repentance, to give a welcome reception to that righteouſneſs which is accompanied with ſalvation, and which God never fails to impart to thoſe who are diſpoſed to receive them with humility and gratitude. Compliance with this demand is indiſpenſibly requiſite that people become partakers of theſe celeſtial gifts, and manifeſt their divine efficacy in holineſs of life.—*And let them bring forth ſalvation*; which conſiſts in deliverance from

the greateſt evils; in reſtoration to the favour and image of God; and the enjoyment of the moſt ſubſtantial bleſſings. Let them aſſiduouſly endeavour to exhibit its real nature, its tranſcendent excellence, its indiſpenſible neceſſity, and ſalutary operations.—*And let righteouſneſs ſpring up together.* Salvation and righteouſneſs are intimately and inſeparably connected. The everlaſting righteouſneſs brought in by the Meſſiah is neceſſary to ſalvation, and ſalvation invariably produces the practice of righteouſneſs, of which it conſtitutes an eſſential ingredient; ſo that the one always ſprings up with the other. Theſe two precious bleſſings uniformly make their appearance together, and have a reciprocal influence upon each other, and are therefore here conjoined with the greateſt propriety.—*I the Lord have created it:* by my authoritative command theſe important benefits are conveyed to my people in large meaſures in anſwer to their prayers.

The fulfilment of this prophecy cannot be limited to the time of the Jews reſtoration from captivity, though it was then partially verified under the government of Cyrus. Its true and full completion, I imagine, is to be looked for under the New Teſtament, after the appearance of the Meſſiah, who was ſent down from heaven to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs and ſalvation; from whence the Holy Spirit is alſo ſent, to impart the principles of righteouſneſs and the earneſts of ſalvation, which being thankfully received and cheriſhed, extend their benign influence over the earth. Preludes of this more perfect manifeſtation of the kingdom of God, foretold to take place after the advent of the meſſenger of the covenant, have been enjoyed; and its full accompliſhment may be expected when his righteouſneſs and ſalvation, accompanied with faith and repentance, with holineſs and conſolation, are publiſhed to the whole world.—Let us then earneſtly pray for theſe promiſed effects of the incarnation of the Son of God, and the deſcent of his Spirit, which are ſet forth in the

prophecies

prophecies under images borrowed from the fruitfulneſs of the earth, when watered by rain from heaven. Let us ſupplicate from God for ourſelves the gifts of righteouſneſs and ſalvation, with all the ineſtimable bleſſings comprehended in them and connected with them; ſuch as the juſtification of our perſons, the renovation of our minds, the ſanctification of our natures, and grace to ſerve him with reverence, delight, and joy.

9 Wo unto him that ſtriveth with his Maker! *Let* the potſherd *ſtrive* with the potſherds of the earth. Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it, What makeſt thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Our Prophet next directs his diſcourſe to profligate cenſurers of the ways of God toward his people, who vilified and deſpiſed the predictions and threatenings delivered by his ſervants, as impracticable and not to be fulfilled. Perſons of this deſcription among the Jews, of whom God was the Maker in a peculiar ſenſe, were doubtleſs chiefly intended; though every one poſſeſſing this unhappy temper, and addicted to this practice, is unqueſtionably expoſed to the wo and miſery here denounced. Thoſe who were primarily addreſſed, were at variance with God their Creator on two accounts: *1ſt*, Becauſe he permitted his people to be led captive by their enemies, into a diſtant country where they were oppreſſed. And, *2dly*, Becauſe notwithſtanding the ſervants of the Lord ſpake much concerning their liberation; the event ſeemed altogether improbable, and beyond even the power of God to effect. Theſe however are not the only grounds on which men ſtrive with their Maker. They contend with him by murmuring at his diſpenſations; by reſiſting his authority; and by contemning his inſtructions. To convince perſons who indulge in any of theſe crimes, to alarm them with a ſenſe of their danger, and to induce them to abandon this deteſta-

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ble conduct, I ſhall ſubjoin a few words on each of theſe particulars.

Some ſtrive with their Maker by murmuring at his diſpenſations. God, my brethren, is the ſovereign wiſe diſpoſer of all perſons and events. He allots to every one his proper ſtation; he appoints every circumſtance relative to his condition, and diſpenſes to him that portion of proſperity and adverſity, which ſhall prove moſt conducive to his own glory, and the benefit of his people. None have right to ſay unto him, What doeſt thou? all without exception ought to expreſs humble unreſerved ſubmiſſion to whatever God is pleaſed to order; convinced that every thing is intended to promote the moſt gracious purpoſes. Alas! however, there are not a few who contend with their Maker, as to the equity and rectitude of his diſpenſations with which they are diſſatisfied. They are forward and obſtinate, inſenſible or diſguſted, and averſe to comply with the will of God, intimated by the events with which they are connected. Thus they impeach the wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs of Jehovah, and ſet themſelves to oppoſe the diſpenſations of his providence.—Some ſtrive with their Maker by reſiſting his authority. The moſt high God is King of kings, and Lord of lords, who gives laws and ordinances to all his creatures; particularly to man, who in all reſpects is under law to his Creator. Yet alas! man, fooliſh man, who is leſs than nothing and vanity, preſumptuouſly tranſgreſſes in a thouſand inſtances the commandments of his Maker, and practically declares with the men of Judah, who ſaid, 'We will walk after our own devices, and we 'will every one do the imagination of his own heart*;' and with the proud Egyptian monarch, 'Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey his voice†?' To Pharaoh, God ſaid, let my people go; to man he ſaith, let go your ſins. He that refuſeth to obey the divine authority contendeth with the Almighty, and ſhall aſſuredly find if he holds faſt iniquity, that it will prove more fatal to him than the detaining of Iſrael in bondage did

* Jer. xviii. 12. † Exod. v. 2.

did to the king and people of Egypt.—Others ſtrive with their Maker by contemning his inſtructions. God graciouſly vouchſafes to make known their duty to mankind, by means of the dictates of conſcience, by the truths and precepts of his holy word, by the illuſtrious example of his own Son, and his upright ſervants. To incline men to hearken to theſe inſtructions, and to render them effectual, he ſtrives with them by his Spirit who convinces of ſin, warns of the danger of tranſgreſſion, points out the only way of relief to them that are ready to periſh, and the paths of righteouſneſs wherein they ought to walk. Now he that diſregards the remonſtrances of conſcience, the directions of the word and ſervants of God, and inſtead of cheriſhing, reſiſts the operations of the Holy Spirit, whereby he is grieved and quenched; that perſon ſtrives againſt his Maker. If ſubjects ſtrive with their prince, and ſervants with their maſters, by refuſing to ſubmit to their appointments, their authority and inſtructions; do not thoſe contend with God who act in the ſame manner toward him?

Againſt perſons of this deſcription, complicated miſery and wo is here denounced. Though they may ſeem happy and chearful, in the enjoyment of temporal eaſe and proſperity, yet in the midſt of their laughter there is heavineſs. All their joys reſemble the crackling of thorns under a pot, which make a blaze for a ſhort time, and ſoon die in obſcurity. Wo is his portion; for whom God pronounces miſerable, are indeed miſerable. 'With ſuch 'froward perſons, God will ſhew himſelf froward; 'and he will walk contrary to them who walk con-'trary to him.' How deplorable the ſtate of that man who is in ſuch a caſe as this! 'Trouble and anguiſh 'ſhall make him afraid; they ſhall prevail againſt 'him, for he ſtretcheth out his hand againſt God, and 'ſtrengtheneth himſelf againſt the Almighty; he 'runneth upon him, even upon his neck, upon the 'thick boſſes of his buckler *.' Such is the miſery aſſigned

* Job xv. 24. *et ſeq.*

aſſigned to him that ſtriveth with his Maker; which I have ſet forth in the language of ſcripture, that I might not be thought either to aggravate or diminiſh it.—One wo is paſt, but another quickly cometh, when the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who have not obeyed the goſpel, but contended againſt God. Then thoſe his enemies, who would not that he ſhould reign over them, he will order to be brought forth, and to be ſlain before his face. Can their hands endure, and their hearts be ſtrong in the day that God will deal with them, and render unto them according to their works?—Do not endeavour to extenuate this ſin by excuſing your oppoſition to God; attributing it to bad education, ill example, the ſtrength of temptation, the corruption of nature, the impetuoſity of paſſion, and the difficulty of performing duty. Rather acknowledge with humility, the folly, the impiety, and ingratitude of your conduct in ſtriving with God, who is infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good; and who hath abſolute right to diſpoſe of you and all your intereſts; and beſeech him to be merciful unto you for his great name's ſake.—May theſe weapons of our warfare prove mighty through God, to the pulling down of ſtrong holds, caſting down every imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt; having in a readineſs to revenge all diſobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. Then will you give unto God that unlimited ſubjection he juſtly demands, and eſcape the wo denounced againſt thoſe who ſtrive with their Maker.

Let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of the earth. Potſherds, you know, are broken pieces of brittle earthen veſſels, which are the work of the potter. They are here intended to denote the mean frail ſtate of mankind, whoſe bodies, though curiouſly faſhioned by the ſkilful hand of Jehovah, are eaſily injured

* Exod. v. 1. *et ſeq*

injured and broken to pieces. If men who are weak and infirm, and continually liable to be hurt, muſt needs ſtrive, let them contend one with another; but let them never pretend to ſtruggle with one who is infinitely their ſuperior. Though naturally impotent, it frequently happens that they are turbulent and contentious. The ſeeds of diſcord ſown in the human conſtitution, ſeldom fail to ſpring up, and to produce the moſt diſagreeable effects; ſuch as wars and fightings, confuſion, and every evil work. Every appearance of theſe noxious diſpoſitions ſhould be carefully ſuppreſſed; eſpecially ought every thing to be avoided which diſcovers the groſs impiety that the words under conſideration are intended to check. —*Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it*, &c. Our Prophet farther aſſerts the ſupreme dominion which God hath over his creatures, and expoſes the groſs abſurdity of thoſe who find fault with the diſpenſations, the authority, and inſtructions of Jehovah. If the potter hath power over the clay to form it into what ſhape, and to make of it what veſſels he thinks proper, though he did not give it exiſtence, and hath only the temporary poſſeſſion of it; certainly the great Lord of all hath an unqueſtionable right and power to diſpoſe of the creatures he hath made. His workmanſhip hath no right whatever to ſay inſultingly to him who faſhioned it, *What makeſt thou; or he hath no hands?* This conduct would be as abſurd as if the clay were to quarrel with the potter for putting it into ſuch a form as he gave it. The apoſtle of the Gentiles, in perfect conſiſtency with the ſpirit and deſign of this paſſage, plainly refers to it * when aſſerting the ſovereign right of the Lord God, to do with his own what he pleaſes; to make one veſſel unto honour, and another to diſhonour. The argument here uſed by Iſaiah, to ſilence the murmurs of fooliſh men at God's providential diſpenſations, the apoſtle Paul employs to put a ſtop to diſputes relative to the eternal purpoſes of God, according to which he diſpoſes of men as ſeemeth good in

* Rom. ix. 21.

in his ſight. A better and more concluſive argument could not have been adduced on the ſubject.

10 Wo unto him that ſaith unto *his* father, What begetteſt thou? or to the woman, What haſt thou brought forth?

The extreme folly and danger of the inſolent cavils of preſumptuous people are farther repreſented in theſe words. To cenſure and condemn divine diſpenſations of any kind, is to act a part as unreaſonable and abſurd as the ſon who would impudently ſay to his father or mother, You are altogether unfit to be a parent, it is improper that you have any more children; as you are incapable of managing and directing them. Indeed the ſon who in this manner contemptuouſly reproaches his parents, doth not act ſo diſreſpectfully toward them, (who may be very deficient in performing their duty), as he that dares to challenge and upbraid his Maker in terms like theſe, What makeſt thou? what haſt thou done?—Thus did our Prophet reply to the calumnies of thoſe who blamed the diſpenſations of Providence toward the Jewiſh people, who impiouſly found fault with their Maker, becauſe he ſuffered them to be led captive and oppreſſed by the Babylonians, after he had elevated them to a rich, powerful, and flouriſhing ſtate—And by the arguments we have been conſidering, he clearly ſhews, that the conduct of ſuch fretful, diſcontented perſons, is highly reprehenſible and criminal. Would to God that his reaſoning on this topic were candidly and ſeriouſly attended to, by thoſe who ſeem diſſatiſfied with the divine procedure in various inſtances, that every mouth may be ſtopt, and all the world brought to cordial ſubmiſſion to him who doeth all things well.

11 Thus ſaith the LORD, the Holy One of Iſrael, and his Maker, Aſk me of things

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to come concerning my ſons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

The Lord God appropriates to himſelf the glory of delivering his people from oppreſſion, and of foretelling that illuſtrious event, concerning which he encourages them to enquire of him, who could give ſatisfying anſwers to their requeſts. The ſubject is introduced with great ſolemnity and authority by Jehovah, who claims two important characters of which I formerly treated; namely, the Holy One of Iſrael, and his Maker. Under theſe magnificent titles, he either addreſſed thoſe who diſſatisfied with preſent appearances, were anxious to learn the future fortunes of his people—Or his upright ſervants, who are incited to have recourſe to him in perplexing circumſtances. If the words were directed to the former claſs, their import may be ſhortly this. By conſulting my prophets as to future events, you acknowledge that I (in whoſe name they ſpeak) am perfectly acquainted with them; from thence you certainly infer that I am the true God, the Governor of the Univerſe, and the patron of my people. By acting in this manner, you confeſs that I poſſeſs infinite wiſdom and knowledge, by which all my operations are conducted, and therefore none of them ought to be cenſured or blamed. Nor ought thoſe diſpenſations which relate eſpecially to my children, to be repreſented as harſh or ſevere, inconſiſtent with the intimate relation wherein I ſtand connected with them, and the tender affection that I bear to them. Whilſt you own that I am the Ruler of the world, will you arraign my diſpenſations, and preſume to give me orders reſpecting my conduct toward my people, who are the objects of my peculiar care? In this view, the words adminiſter a ſharp reproof to thoſe who calumniated the ways of God.—If they were directed to his upright ſervants, they are encouraged to have recourſe to him in perplexing circumſtances.—*Aſk of me* with humility and reverence, with faith and ſubmiſſion *of things to come*; not to

gratify vain curioſity, but that you may be inſtructed, and better furniſhed for my ſervice—*Concerning my ſons.* Know then, that if they have been ſo fooliſh as to contend with me, I will viſit their tranſgreſſions with the rod, nevertheleſs my loving kindneſs will I not utterly take from them, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail.—If they are deploring their ignorance and impotence under an afflicting ſenſe of their need of divine inſtruction and of power from on high; I will teach them the way that they ſhould go, and ſtrengthen them in the Lord their God, that they may walk up and down in his name.—If terrified at the approach of calamity and the proſpect of diſſolution, I will enable them to adopt the triumphant language, O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy deſtruction. From ſuch information, you may learn what they have to expect, and how they ought to be employed.—*And concerning the work of my hands command ye me.* The work of God's hands, may denote the operations of his providence and grace toward his church. Such is his condeſcending regard to the ſupplications of his ſervants, that they may aſk what they will, and it ſhall be done unto them, if agreeable to the will of God, and conducive to the benefit of his children. Do you requeſt of God ſtrength to ſupport and defend you, wiſdom to inſtruct and guide you, the Holy Spirit to ſanctify and comfort you. Theſe, and things of a ſimilar nature, you are allowed to aſk and expect from him who hears and grants the deſires of the humble.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded.

The Lord God claims the honour of having created the univerſe, with all its inhabitants, and therefore he cannot be deficient in wiſdom, power, and

and goodneſs, to reſcue his people from captivity by means of the illuſtrious perſon he was to raiſe up for that purpoſe.—*I have made the earth.* I brought it into exiſtence at my pleaſure; I gave it the convenient form that it poſſeſſes; and appointed the ſtation which it occupies among my works. I made the large mountains and fruitful valleys, whereby its ſurface is diverſified; the vaſt variety of materials whereof it is compoſed; the trees, the ſhrubs, and the corns which it produces, for the ſupport and convenience of its inhabitants—*And created man upon it*, who is the lord and the epitome of the lower part of creation. I raiſed from the duſt the beautiful ſtructure of the human body, and gave it the comely figure, the delicate proportion which it poſſeſſes. I formed not only his body, whereby he is allied to inferior animals, but I created alſo the ſpirit that is within him, by which he is connected with ſuperior intelligences: I endowed him with thoſe noble faculties of reaſon and underſtanding that adorn and dignify his mind.—*I, even my hands have ſtretched out the heavens.* In ſcripture, hands, which are the inſtruments wherewith men perform their work, are attributed to Jehovah, to ſignify the power whereby he executes his work with the moſt exquiſite ſkill and ability, ſo as in all reſpects it is complete and perfect. I extended the clouds, from whence the earth is watered; I gave exiſtence to the immenſe regions of the air; I ſtretched out the immeaſurable expanſe, wherein are placed the luminaries that enlighten the habitation of man; and the imperial heavens, wherein I have my ſpecial reſidence, with all my holy ones.—*And all their hoſt have I commanded.* The expreſſion ſeems to allude to the commander of a great army, who points out the ſtations, and directs the movements of every part of it, and orders them out on whatever ſervices he pleaſes. Jehovah hath entirely at his direction and command all the angels, all the planets, all the clouds; they obey his orders, and they continue to this day according to his ordi-

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nance.—The contemplation of the glory of the Lord, illuſtriouſly diſplayed in the heavens and the earth, ought to conſtrain us to celebrate his praiſes who created all things to obey his ſupreme authority, whoſe kingdom ruleth over all; and to confide in his power and faithfulneſs to whom nothing is impoſſible.

13 I have raiſed him up in righteouſneſs, and I will direct all his ways: he ſhall build my city, and he ſhall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, ſaith the LORD of hoſts.

The Lord God again declares his purpoſe of raiſing up Cyrus king of Perſia, to accompliſh the important ſervice to which he was deſtined. He was to be called forth by the Almighty, to execute the work aſſigned to him in righteouſneſs; that the equity and veracity of God might be diſplayed in the liberation of his people, and in the juſt puniſhment of their enemies; and that the candour and humanity of the prince their deliverer might be conſpicuous. Jehovah was to give him exiſtence, to exalt him to regal dignity, and to crown his enterpriſes with ſucceſs; that he might plead the cauſe of his injured people, and ſet them free from captivity and oppreſſion.—*He ſhall build my city.* Jeruſalem is doubtleſs the city here intended, which God had choſen, wherein he delighted to dwell, and which, on ſeveral accounts, was called the city of the Lord. According to this prediction, Cyrus by royal proclamation gave orders, and offered encouragement for rebuilding the once highly favoured metropolis of Judea.—*He ſhall let go my captives.* The Jews, who were in a peculiar manner the people of God, had been long detained in captivity at Babylon, were to be generouſly releaſed and ſet at liberty by the Perſian monarch, without ranſom or reward, and allowed to return to their own land. This article of the prophecy was alſo exactly fulfilled by Cyrus, who, without any compenſation, diſmiſſed from their bondage the Jewiſh

iſh people, and gave them ample encouragement to rebuild the temple of the Lord and the city of Jeruſalem, wiſhing that the Lord God might proſper them in the work. To give certainty and ſtability to theſe predictions, the Prophet refers them to their author the Lord of hoſts, who rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and who never fails to do as he hath ſaid.—Whilſt we record the faithfulneſs of Jehovah, in raiſing up faviours to his ancient people; let us celebrate his praiſes who in righteouſneſs raiſed up for us a far more glorious deliverer than Cyrus; one who is mighty to ſave, whoſe way was made plain before him, who builds the church, the city of the living God, who proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the priſon to them that are bound.

14 Thus ſaith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandiſe of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of ſtature ſhall come over unto thee, and they ſhall be thine: they ſhall come after thee; in chains they ſhall come over: and they ſhall fall down unto thee, they ſhall make ſupplication unto thee, *ſaying*, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none elſe, *there is* no God.

The happy effects of the deliverance above foretold, emblematical of the more joyful conſequences to reſult from the redemption of the Meſſiah, are repreſented in theſe words, which were primarily addreſſed to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem and Judea, reſtored to the poſſeſſion of their own city and country. After their return from Babylon, many proſelytes of various nations, eſpecially of thoſe kingdoms here mentioned, were to join themſelves to the Jewiſh church. Convinced by ſatisfying arguments of the truth of their religion, they were to come to Jeruſalem as humble ſuppliants, to worſhip the God

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of Iſrael; to make ſolemn profeſſion of their faith, and to requeſt admiſſion into his church. And after the advent of the Meſſiah, under the œconomy of grace, the largeſt acceſſion of converts to the faith and obedience of the goſpel of Chriſt was to take place, when not only individuals, but whole nations, were to bow to his ſceptre, to receive his doctrine, to confide in his righteouſneſs, and to acknowledge his divinity.

The labour of Egypt, &c. The land of Egypt abounded with fine flax, of which the inhabitants ſpun large quantities of yarn, and made fine linen, held in univerſal eſtimation on account of its peculiar excellence. This might be called the ſtaple article of the trade and labour of that country, from which it derived great opulence.—*And merchandiſe of Ethiopia;* one part of which was ſituated in Aſia, and another in Africa. Probably the inhabitants of the country of Abyſſinia, lying to the ſouth-weſt of the Red Sea, and to the ſouth of Egypt, are chiefly intended. The Ethiopians were a very numerous powerful people, who could not only have brought into the field of battle a prodigious army, but could have produced an immenſe number of artificers and merchants; by whom the kingdom was enriched.—*And of the Sabeans;* who dwelt in Arabia, who were either the poſterity of Ham the ſon of Noah, or of Abraham by Keturah; for among the deſcendents of each of them there was a Seba or Sheba, from one of whom the Sabeans might have derived their name.—*Men of ſtature ſhall come over unto thee.* This expreſſion may be intended to ſignify, that people of the moſt reſpectable appearance, poſſeſſing great affluence, dignity, and authority, from among the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans, ſome of whom are ſaid to have been remarkably tall, and of large ſtature—were to be converted to Judaiſm, and many of them afterward to the Chriſtian faith. In conſequence whereof, the fruits of their labour and merchandiſe were to be brought over to the church, and by them to be conſecrated to the

ſervice

ſervice and honour of Jehovah, to whom they were to dedicate themſelves and all their poſſeſſions.

And they ſhall be thine. They were to devote not only their ſubſtance, but themſelves, to advance the glory of God, and the good of his people, and to act as the churches of Macedonia were in following times diſpoſed to do by the grace of God. 'They firſt 'gave themſelves to the Lord, and unto us (ſaith the 'apoſtle Paul *) by the will of God.'—*They ſhall come after thee.* Conſtrained by genuine affection to adminiſter whatever aſſiſtance is in their power, they ſhall follow thee in the exerciſe of true penitence and fervent prayer, ſolicitous to participate of the precious benefits peculiar to the people of God. The ſubject is beautifully illuſtrated by the prophet Zechariah, in the following words: 'Thus ſaith the 'Lord of hoſts, It ſhall yet come to paſs, that there 'ſhall come people, and the inhabitants of many ci-'ties: and the inhabitants of one city ſhall go to an-'other, ſaying, Let us go ſpeedily to pray before the 'Lord, and to ſeek the Lord of hoſts: I will go alſo. 'Yea, many people and ſtrong nations ſhall come to 'ſeek the Lord of hoſts in Jeruſalem, and to pray be-'fore the Lord †.'—*In chains they ſhall come over.* I pretend not to determine whether the chains here intended ought to be literally or figuratively underſtood—whether they ſignify external marks of diſtinction, or badges of ſlavery—or denote the powerful inward conſtraints whereby every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Chriſt. In the former ſenſe of the word, the prediction intimates that perſons in the moſt honourable ſtations, and in the loweſt and moſt abject conditions, were to come over and join themſelves to the church of God. In the latter ſenſe, the prophecy repreſents the converts to the true religion in a ſtate of mind like that of the apoſtle Paul, when he ſaid, 'Behold, I go bound 'in the Spirit to Jeruſalem ‡.' Obliged in conſcience and duty, he was firmly reſolved to act as he

* 2 Cor. viii. 5. † Chap. viii. 20, 21, 22. ‡ Acts xx. 22.

he did, being urged forward by a ſtrong impulſe of the Spirit of God, who works effectually in them that believe. By his mighty co-operation, the people here ſpoken of were to be induced to come over to the ſervice of the living God.

And they ſhall fall down unto thee, &c. Not to pay any ſacred homage to the church; for it is written, 'Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him on-'ly ſhalt thou ſerve *;' but to teſtify the humble ſenſe they had of their own unworthineſs, and the profound reſpect they felt for the ſervants of the true God; to whom they approached with ſentiments of eſteem and affection, deſirous to be admitted to ſhare in the precious privileges belonging to his peculiar people, and to enjoy intimate communion with them in the ordinances of divine appointment. With this requeſt ſhould be joined the acknowledgment—*Surely God is in thee*. The Lord God had a fixed permanent habitation among his people of old; and therefore he was emphatically ſaid to dwell among them. But this was not all; according to the words before us, he is alſo in them. Having been received into his family, and formed after his image, his word dwells in them richly, being laid up in their hearts as a valuable treaſure—his Spirit abides in them continually, as in his temple, wherein he is highly honoured, and his preſence ever attends them, to ſtrengthen, to refreſh, and gladden their hearts. This divine preſence is their higheſt glory and greateſt delight; it yields them ſafety and comfort; ſo that in the contemplation of this privilege they exult with the royal prophet, 'God is in the midſt of his church; 'ſhe ſhall not be moved †.' Were this pleaſing acknowledgment, this honourable prerogative, attended to as it ought, the people of God would perform the moſt difficult duties, and ſuſtain the greateſt afflictions with more chearfulneſs than is commonly done.—To this expreſſion the apoſtle Paul ſeems to allude, when directing to the proper uſe of ſpiritual gifts,

* Mat. iv. 10. † Pſal. xlvi. 5.

gifts, that they may promote edification. 'If all pro-
'phecy, and there come in one that believeth not,
'or unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of
'all. And thus are the ſecrets of his heart made
'manifeſt; and ſo falling down on his face he will
'worſhip God, and report that God is in you *;' that the preſence of God is in the church; that the power of God attends the miniſtry of the word. Many valuable ends are promoted by this acknowledgment; a ſinner being converted, God is worſhipped, credit is given to the goſpel, Jeſus Chriſt is magnified, and his ſervants are honoured.—The verſe under conſideration concludes thus, *And there is none elſe, there is no God.* The Hebrew words might be tranſlated, *None other than he is in them, there is no God beſide him whatever*, who reigns in the hearts of his people, and by his reſidence in them renders them truly bleſſed.

15 Verily thou *art* a God that hideſt thyſelf, O God of Iſrael the Saviour.

The ſervants of God are introduced expreſſing their admiration of the tranſcendent glory of Jehovah, and the unſearchable ways of his providence toward them.—He is addreſſed as the God of Iſrael, of his natural poſterity, who were called by his name, and diſtinguiſhed from other nations by many ſignal advantages. By the writers of the New Teſtament, we are taught to conſider that highly favoured people as exhibiting a lively repreſentation of the ſpiritual Iſrael, who enjoy all the ſubſtantial benefits conferred upon the literal Iſrael, and ſet forth by types and figures to their view. After Iſrael according to the fleſh were broken off becauſe of their unbelief, the Gentiles were graffed in, and inveſted with the character and privileges which the children of Jacob had enjoyed and deſpiſed.—The chief of theſe are here mentioned, namely, that Jehovah is the God of Iſrael,

* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

the Saviour. It is difficult, if not impoſſible, to unfold the full import of the former of theſe expreſſions, and to ſhew what the Lord does and engages to do for his people to whom he is God. This much, however, is clearly revealed and plainly comprehended in this relation. He is their Father, who gives them exiſtence in every capacity; who provides, inſtructs, corrects, and bleſſes them. He is their Redeemer, who reſcues them from captivity, and from the hands of their enemies; who introduces them into glorious liberty and felicity. He is their Lord, who aſſigns them the ſervices they perform; who aſſures them of ſeaſonable ſupport, and the rich rewards of grace. He is their king, who governs them by his laws, who protects them by his power, enriches them from his treaſures, and opens to their view the moſt glorious proſpects. All theſe benefits united, give but an imperfect idea of what is comprehended in Jehovah being the God of Iſrael—the Saviour who delivers from enemies and evils of every deſcription, from preſent and impending deſtruction; and who confers the moſt deſirable and ineſtimable bleſſings.

Verily thou art a God that hideſt thyſelf. Though omnipreſent, thou art inviſible; thou haſt made darkneſs thy ſecret place, and thy pavilion round about. 'Behold we go forward, but thou art not there; and 'backward, but we cannot perceive thee; on the left 'hand where thou doſt work, but we cannot behold 'thee; thou hideſt thyſelf on the right hand, that we 'cannot ſee thee *.' No man hath ſeen thee at any time, who art the King eternal, immortal, and inviſible; even thy people of old, to whom thou gaveſt laws and ordinances, ſaw no manner of ſimilitude on the day thou ſpakeſt to them in Horeb, out of the midſt of the fire. And as thou thyſelf art concealed from human view, ſo the diſpenſations of thy providence toward thy church, far exceed our underſtanding; being inveloped in impenetrable obſcurity. Thy operations are far above out of ſight, ſo that we perceive

* Job xxiii. 8, 9.

ceive not the conſummate wiſdom and prudence whereby they are directed. How ſurpriſing thy conduct toward thy peculiar people, whom thou haſt choſen and redeemed; in permitting vaſt numbers of them to be killed by the ſword; great part of them that remained, to be led into captivity; the temple built to the honour of thy name to be deſtroyed; thy beloved city reduced to aſhes; and the land of Canaan which thou gaveſt for an inheritance to our fathers, diveſted of its inhabitants! Beſides, thou ſeemeſt to have altogether deſerted thy people, and to allow them to periſh from off the earth; as thy upright ſervants have often dreaded, and as the profane have inſolently ſaid thou wouldſt do. Notwithſtanding theſe apparently adverſe circumſtances, it ſhall be ſeen in the event, that thy diſpenſations, however dark and inexplicable at preſent, were ſo conducted as to purify thy church from the wicked, the idolatrous and hypocritical, and to diſplay in the moſt glorious manner, that thou art the God of Iſrael the Saviour. In due ſeaſon thou wilt exalt thy people to a more proſperous ſtate than in times paſt, and enrich them with the bleſſings of thy grace; and therefore it becomes us to adore thee the God who hideſt thyſelf from thy church in various ways. Thou ſometimes withholds from thy ſervants the fruits of thy loving kindneſs, by which they were formerly favoured and refreſhed—thou concealeſt from them the reaſons and deſigns of the diſpenſations of thy providence and grace—thou reſtraineſt the pledges of thy gracious preſence, whereby they were felicitated in times paſt—thou alloweſt the delightful improving correſpondence they maintained with thee to be interrupted; and on particular occaſions—thou withdraweſt from them the reviving light of thy countenance, ſo that they walk diſconſolate in darkneſs. This divine conduct which at firſt view ſeems inexplicable, ſerves to promote many valuable purpoſes, which ought not to be overlooked. It manifeſts the glorious ſovereignty of Jehovah; ſome of whoſe diſpenſations carry with them their own reaſon

ſon and evidence, whilſt others cannot at preſent be accounted for: it adminiſters ſharp reproof for indulgence in any tranſgreſſion, which expoſes to reproach the ways of God: it conveys uſeful admonition for negligence and formality in the performance of duty, which ſhould be attentively conſidered.—Be ſolicitous, then, to diſcover the cauſes why God doth in this manner hide himſelf from you; and endeavour by all means to get them removed, whilſt you ſtudy to comply with the gracious deſigns God hath in view to promote, by obſcure diſpenſations of providence and grace.

16 They ſhall be aſhamed, and alſo confounded, all of them: they ſhall go to confuſion together *that are* makers of idols.

The utter diſgrace and confuſion that ſhall be the certain portion of idolaters is explicitly foretold. Diſappointed expectations reſpecting the advantages they fooliſhly imagined they were to enjoy; the conſcious ſenſe of their extreme folly, in having honoured thoſe lying vanities which they ought to have deſpiſed, ſhall involve them in anguiſh and diſgrace—*All of them ſhall go into confuſion together.* Greatly agitated by conſternation and dread, and reduced to the utmoſt diſorder and diſtreſs, like thoſe who are in perplexity; they ſhall be ſo terribly embarraſſed as not to know what to do or where to go. Their minds being diſtracted with ignominy, reproach and ſorrow; their condition ſhall be truly miſerable and beyond redreſs. This ſhall be the portion of them who make and ſerve graven images, who boaſt themſelves of idols. 'Worſhip Jehovah; for he is high 'above all the earth, and exalted far above all gods*.'

17 *But* Iſrael ſhall be ſaved in the LORD with an everlaſting ſalvation: ye ſhall not be aſhamed nor confounded world without end.

After

* Pſal. xcvii. 9.

After the ſolemn adoration of the myſterious counſels and operations of Jehovah, and the awful denunciation of the confuſion of idolaters, the church is brought forward triumphing in the ſalvation of Iſrael, not only from temporal captivity, but from everlaſting deſtruction. What a perfect contraſt does the miſery of idolaters form to the felicity of God's people. All the former without exception, ſhall be confounded; the latter ſhall never be aſhamed; the former ſhall go into confuſion; the latter ſhall be for ever ſaved in the Lord to the ages of eternity.—Whilſt Iſaiah foreſaw by the Spirit of prophecy, the deliverance that was to be wrought for the Jewiſh people, by means of Cyrus king of Perſia, his thoughts were elevated to contemplate the ſpiritual eternal ſalvation, which in the fulneſs of time was to be accompliſhed by Jeſus Chriſt for his church. In the delightful proſpect opened to his view, he exclaims with exultation and joy—*Iſrael* (all who are Iſraelites indeed in whom there is no guile) *ſhall be ſaved.* The promiſes which God hath made to his people are not to be confined to temporal ſalvation, the enjoyment of which is ſubject to the various viciſſitudes of all earthly poſſeſſions, that ſoon decay and periſh. A greater, a more complete, and durable, even an everlaſting ſalvation, which God hath promiſed to his ſervants, and of which the deliverances wrought of old were typical, is the object of their pleaſing expectation. On this ineſtimable benefit, the hope of the faithful in all ages terminated; our Prophet's views were concentred, and to this everlaſting glory he often looked forward and alluded in his diſcourſes.

Iſrael ſhall be ſaved in the Lord, i. e. through him, as the apoſtle Paul writes in his epiſtle to the Romans *. The elect of God diſperſed over the earth, ſhall be ſaved through the powerful operation of his glorious excellencies, and in virtue of the perfect righteouſneſs of the great Meſſiah—They ſhall be ſaved through the love of God, who ſo loved the world,

* Chap. v. 9.

world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life—They ſhall be ſaved in his infinite wiſdom, which he hath wonderfully diſplayed in deviſing and executing the aſtoniſhing plan of ſalvation—and thro' his almighty power, whereby he works in them that believe, and preſerves them to the enjoyment of it in full perfection—They ſhall be ſaved in his conſummate righteouſneſs, the rectitude of his nature, the equity of his providence, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſes, being clearly demonſtrated by the accompliſhment of this ſalvation. In this manner the people of God are ſaved in the Lord, and obtain complete and eternal deliverance from all evil, and the full perpetual enjoyment of undecaying felicity and glory. It greatly enhances the value of this ſalvation, that it is everlaſting, without interruption, and without end. To conclude in the words of an eminent writer, 'Could I ſpeak ever ſo long on 'this ſubject, all my thoughts and expreſſions would 'fall infinitely ſhort of it. It is our happineſs, that 'we are incapable of fully underſtanding it. So 'that here our incapacity turns to advantage, and 'ſhould excite our moſt ſolicitous purſuit; for it is 'infinitely above all that we can aſk or think.'—*Ye ſhall not be aſhamed* of your hope, nor diſappointed of your expectation, like idolaters, who truſt in vanity. Ye ſhall never be confounded or diſtreſſed with perplexity and vexation, through immortal ages.

18 For thus ſaith the LORD that created the heavens; God himſelf, that formed the earth and made it; he hath eſtabliſhed it, he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none elſe.

Theſe words contain a ſublime introduction to that portion of our Prophet's diſcourſe, wherein he eſtabliſhes the divinity of the God of Iſrael, from the clear

clear predictions he had delivered reſpecting the glorious work of which he was treating; and wherein he ſhews the folly of idolaters. Jehovah ſpeaking by his ſervant claims the high prerogative of having given exiſtence to the univerſe. The Hebrew words import, that the Lord who created the heavens, is the ſame God that formed the earth. The Lord God ſtretched out the heavens, to be his own peculiar reſidence, and the habitation of thoſe miniſtering ſpirits who contemplate his glory, celebrate his praiſes, and execute his pleaſure. The ſame God formed the earth, with all its component parts: he made it in the ſhape he judged moſt proper; he diſpoſed the ſeveral materials of which it is conſtituted; he completed the work, and gave it all the decorations which it poſſeſſes. He hath eſtabliſhed this large ponderous globe, that hath no viſible ſupport, in the region of the air, where it is as firmly ſettled as if it reſted on the moſt ſolid foundation. In the words of the royal Pſalmiſt, 'He hath founded the earth upon the 'ſeas, and eſtabliſhed the world upon the floods †.' He hath placed the earth in the ſtation which it occupies amidſt the other ſpheres; ſo that it exhibits a continued miracle of the omnipotence and goodneſs of its great Creator; by whom it is upheld and preſerved from the encroachments of the waters with which it is encompaſſed.

He created it not in vain, to no valuable purpoſe, nor that it might remain empty and uſeleſs. He made it to ſerve thoſe important ends which are worthy of himſelf, the manifeſtation of his power; and that from thence he might receive a revenue of praiſe and honour and glory; for of him, through him, and to him, are all things. He formed it to be inhabited by the children of men, to whom he hath given it for a habitation; and who in return for his unbounded beneficence ought to ſerve and obey him as the angels do in heaven. To this end the earth was deſtined by its great Creator; for this uſe it was prepared

† Pſalm xxiv. 2.

prepared, and therefore it would be unbecoming the majeſty and wiſdom of God to permit it to be deſtitute of inhabitants, who fear and worſhip him; whoſe buſineſs is to do him ſervice, and to enjoy the pleaſing ſatisfaction that reſults from his approbation.—*I am the Lord and there is none elſe.* The ſignificant expreſſions that occur in this verſe plainly intimate, that Jehovah is the moſt high God, who not only formed the heavens to be the reſidence of his glory, but who alſo made and repleniſhed the earth; and therefore he is the Lord both of heaven and earth.—In the faith of this important truth, let us look forward to that happy period when according to prophecy, all the nations of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt, and all kindreds of the people ſhall worſhip before him, and do him homage.

19 I have not ſpoken in ſecret, in a dark place of the earth: I ſaid not unto the ſeed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. I the LORD ſpeak righteouſneſs. I declare things that are right.

Jehovah in proof that he is God alone, appeals to three ſeveral evidences to confirm the juſtice of his claim.—*I have not ſpoken in ſecret.* The anſwers given by the heathen oracles to thoſe who conſulted them, were commonly delivered in an obſcure manner, and in ambiguous terms, that in which way ſo ever the event happened, they might be conſidered as juſt and true. On the contrary the God of Iſrael ſpake openly to his people from mount Sinai; he promulgated his law in the moſt public ſolemn manner with a clear and audible voice. By his ſervants the prophets, he announced in public aſſemblies, and in explicit terms, the purpoſes of his grace, and the future events of his providence, particularly the deliverance of his people from captivity by means of Cyrus, and the benefits with which their liberation was to be attended.

tended.—*In a dark place of the earth.* The heathen reſponſes were often given by perſons who peeped with a ſhrill, or muttered with a hollow voice, which was not well underſtood, being delivered from ſome obſcure deep cavern. Whereas the God of Iſrael ſpake to his people in the moſt conſpicuous places, and in ſuch a manner as ſerved to diſpel their doubts, and to afford them the moſt ſatisfying information.

I ſaid not to the ſeed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. The expreſſion probably refers to fictitious gods of the heathen, whoſe votaries ſought in vain their aſſiſtance, and never reaped any advantage whatſoever from the homage rendered to idols. In oppoſition to theſe unprofitable ſervices, the God of Iſrael declares that he never allowed any of his ſervant's poſterity to worſhip him in vain. More is intended than expreſſed. The Lord God hath required his people to ſeek him for the moſt important purpoſes, and by means of this exerciſe they obtain the greateſt advantages. They are allowed and encouraged to pour out their hearts before him, and he hears them in an acceptable time; yea, whilſt they open their lips in prayer, he is pleaſed to open his bountiful hand to grant their requeſts, and liberally to ſupply their neceſſities. He often gives them more than they have either wiſdom or confidence to ſeek, and does for them beyond what they can aſk or think. Of this reviving truth, many remarkable inſtances are recorded in ſcripture. Abraham begged from God the life of Iſhmael; and God promiſed him the birth of Iſaac, in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. David aſked life from God; he gave him life, and with it a crown and a kingdom.—What aſtoniſhing grace in God; what ample encouragement to ſeek the Lord; that he condeſcends graciouſly to regard the ſincere though languid requeſts, that proceed even from a wandering heart, and a mind diſtracted with vain thoughts! This mercy juſtly ſurpriſed the royal prophet, and ſhould excite us to join with him in expreſſing our admiration

and gratitude. 'Bleſſed be the Lord, for he hath 'ſhewed me his marvellous kindneſs in a ſtrong city. 'For I ſaid in my haſte, I am cut off from before thine 'eyes; nevertheleſs thou heardeſt the voice of my 'ſupplications *.'

I the Lord ſpeak righteouſneſs, or truth, as the Hebrew word ſignifies. The expreſſion imports, 'I an-'nounce and place before you, the truth, which cannot 'be controverted.' The oracles publiſhed among the heathen nations were not only delivered in dark ambiguous terms, frequently inconſiſtent with truth and righteouſneſs; but they tended to confound the eſſential difference between good and evil. Very different are the oracles of the living God, wherein he always publiſhed the truth; declared that which is right, and eſtabliſhed the important diſtinction between moral good and evil. Everlaſting righteouſneſs is in all his commandments; in all the doctrines, promiſes, and threatenings contained in his holy word, wherein he hath revealed the righteouſneſs brought in by the Meſſiah; in the rewards he will beſtow upon his ſervants, and the puniſhments he will inflict upon the wicked.—By theſe unequivocal proofs doth Jehovah evince his eternal power and Godhead; and ſhew that he is God, and there is none elſe: by the ſame evidences did the Son of God manifeſted in the fleſh, demonſtrate his divinity. Far from ſhunning the light and concealing himſelf, he publicly taught the multitudes that reſorted to him, in the moſt open and undiſguiſed manner. This was his uniform practice at all times, whether he inſtructed the people in ſeaſon, or out of ſeaſon; and in all places, whether in the wilderneſs, on the mountain, on board a ſhip, in the ſynagogue, or in the temple; where convened the moſt ſolemn aſſemblies of the Iſraelites. In ſecret, Jeſus Chriſt declared, have I ſaid nothing. I have kept no clandeſtine meetings from which any were excluded; and in private, I ever taught what I enjoined my diſciples to

* Pſalm xxxi. 21, 22.

to publiſh to the world, and what I inculcated in public. Far from ſaying to the poſterity of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I ſaid aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek and ye ſhall find; knock and it ſhall be opened unto you *. Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, I will give it you †.—*I the Lord ſpeak righteouſneſs.* This expreſſion is ſimilar to that uſed by the prophet David, when ſpeaking in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt; he declares himſelf to have acted up to the prophetical part of his character, by preaching the doctrines of truth, righteouſneſs, and ſalvation, without concealment. I have preached righteouſneſs in the great congregation, *&c.* ‡—After the illuſtrious example of the Son of God, let us walk in the light and ſpeak righteouſneſs; then we need not fear though our words and actions be known by the world: for being wrought in God, by his aſſiſtance, according to his will, and for the advancement of his glory they cannot be condemned.

20 ¶ Aſſemble yourſelves, and come: draw near together, ye *that are* eſcaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that ſet up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot ſave.

That with greater effect he might expoſe and reprove the folly of idolaters, the Lord God calls upon his people to convene, that they might attend to this important ſubject.—The Jews liberated from captivity, and reſcued from the errors and ſuperſtitions of the heathen, with the proſelytes from among the Gentiles, who had renounced the idolatry and falſe religion to which the greater part of the nations were addicted, are here particularly addreſſed. All thoſe might be included who were confirmed in the faith of the true God, and who were devoted to his worſhip and ſervice. Such are ſolemnly required to come together, that they might liſten to the following admonition,

* Matth. vii. 7. † John xiv. 13. ‡ Pſalm xl. 9, 10.

admonition, and be convinced of the abſurdity of the practice here reprobated—*They have no knowledge*, &c. They muſt indeed be notoriouſly ignorant and deſtitute of underſtanding, who ſet up the wood of a graven image as the object of worſhip. After all the expence and labour employed in forming the idol, it ſtill remains a piece of timber, formed for the abominable purpoſe of giving to it ſacred homage. Such was its imbecility, that it could not move, but required to be tranſported from place to place, and to be put into the houſe or temple deſigned for its reception, from which it could not depart. Much leſs could it anſwer the requeſts preſented to it, or ſave from danger and diſtreſs. To pray then to an image made of wood, that can neither do good nor evil, diſcovers the groſſeſt ignorance, and involves the greateſt inconſiſtency that can be imagined.

21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near: yea, let them take counſel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD; and *there is* no god elſe beſide me; a juſt God, and a Saviour: *there is* none beſide me.

Whilſt Iſaiah foretold the liberation of the Jewiſh people by means of Cyrus, he probably beheld in that event a ſtriking repreſentation of the deliverance of the church of God by Jeſus Chriſt. In this pleaſing proſpect he rejoiced, and invited the ſaved from among the nations, to bring forward any objections they could aſſign to the argument he had adduced, in favour of the eternal power and godhead of Jehovah. If they knew any perſons eſteemed more wiſe and acute than others, they are directed to call them in to their aſſiſtance, and to conſult with them as to the exceptions that could be made to the proofs that had been ſtated for the God of Iſrael, and to ſhew the abſurdity of idolatry. If after all, they could not refute our Prophet's arguments

ments, they ought to confeſs the truth, acknowledge that idolaters were fairly vanquiſhed; and therefore they ought, without heſitation, to adhere to the faith and worſhip of the true God.—*Who hath declared this from ancient time.* Whoever made known the great event alluded to throughout the whole of this diſcourſe, namely, the deliverance of Judah from captivity, typical of the far more glorious deliverance of all the Iſrael of God from a more grievous bondage?—*Who hath told it from that time* in which there was not the leaſt appearance of its accompliſhment. —*Have not I the Lord,* given this ſatisfying proof of my exiſtence, perfections, and providence, and by this event demonſtrated that I am Omniſcient, Almighty, and faithful in fulfilling the predictions and promiſes given to the church. The concluſion to be deduced from theſe premiſes is again repeated, 'There 'is no god elſe beſide me,' &c.

22 Look unto me, and be ye ſaved all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none elſe.

The Lord God addreſſes a kind invitation to the Gentiles to come and partake of the ſalvation he had been pleaſed to reveal.—The call is directed to all the ends of the earth. The expreſſion accords with the Jewiſh notion; that their land was ſituated in the midſt of the earth, and that the countries which lay moſt remote from them, whoſe circumſtances formed a contraſt to theirs, were the ends or extremities of the earth. The inhabitants of the moſt diſtant regions and kingdoms are certainly intended. In this ſenſe, the expreſſion is uſed in the ſecond Pſalm, where the Meſſiah is encouraged to aſk, in recompenſe for his labours and ſufferings, the heathen for his inheritance, the utmoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion; and aſſured that they ſhall be given to him. To accompliſh this deſirable purpoſe, the Son of God exhibits himſelf with the riches of his grace to all nations without

without diſtinction; requiring them to contemplate his glory, to hearken to his voice, and to accept of his righteouſneſs and ſalvation, which he prepared before the face of all people.—The invitation is given to all, without exception, whatever be their character and condition, whether young or old, high or low, rich or poor. Whoſoever you are, whatever you have been in time paſt, the Son of God, the Lord of glory, ſaith unto you,

Look unto me. Convinced of your ſin, miſery, and danger; perſuaded of my conſummate ability, and all-ſufficient grace; turn your attention to me, and in the exerciſe of reverence and love, of faith, hope, and truſt, contemplate the illuſtrious diſplays which I have given of my divine excellencies, and readineſs to ſave. Relying on my tender mercy and faithful word, place all your dependence and expectations on my power, and grace, and faithfulneſs, who am mighty to ſave. Highly gratified with the pleaſing ſurvey, deeply impreſſed with an affecting ſenſe of your urgent neceſſities, and of your infinite need every moment of my compaſſionate aid; look ſteadily to me, the Author and finiſher of ſalvation; even as the Iſraelites ſtung in the wilderneſs, viewed the brazen ſerpent exhibited as the only effectual remedy for their diſtempers. Think not that a ſlight ſuperficial glance is enough. Look with fixed hearts and ardent deſires of obtaining ſalvation, until delighted with my glory and beauty, you renounce all confidence in yourſelves, and the lying vanities of this world, and adopt the language of the church, 'Behold, as the eyes of ſervants look unto the hands of 'their maſters, ſo our eyes wait upon the Lord our 'God, until he have mercy upon us *.' Fix your attention upon me, until you can ſay with my ſervant David, Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord †; mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee is my truſt, leave not my ſoul deſtitute ‡.—Beware of excuſing yourſelf from complying with this call by urging

* Pſalm cxxiii. 2. † Pſal. xxv. 15. ‡ Pſal. cxli. 8.

urging your inability to comply with it. Convert this circumſtance rather into an argument to excite importunity in prayer to God, who giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might increaſeth ſtrength. Plead not the number and atrocity of your ſins, as a ground of exemption from this neceſſary exerciſe; conſider them rather as ſuggeſting a powerful motive which ought to conſtrain you to immediate compliance—Neither raſhly conclude that you have already yielded ſufficiently to the Saviour's demand. If ever you have contemplated him aright, looking ſtedfaſtly to him will be your continued delightful employment.

And be ye ſaved; not merely from temporal calamities, and advanced to the enjoyment of preſent peace and proſperity; but ye ſhall be delivered from ſpiritual evils and eternal deſtruction. Such is the efficacious grace and power of Jehovah, that ſalvation freely flows from him to thoſe who comply with his generous invitations. There is not any thing that mankind ſo much need as ſalvation. This ſimple truth is abundantly evident from the ſcriptures of truth, from incontrovertible facts, from manifold experience, from the interpoſition of the Son of God in our behalf, and his exhibiting himſelf in the character of a Saviour. All theſe, with many other evidences, clearly ſhew, that men are in a periſhing condition. Alas! however, great part of the human race ſeem inſenſible of their danger, and indifferent about deliverance. To thoſe who are ſenſible of their perilous ſtate, how joyful the tidings, how comfortable the aſſurance, publiſhed by him who is faithful, that looking to him they ſhall be ſaved! He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt at all times, in all places, perſons of all deſcriptions; he is able to ſave in the moſt complete manner, and in the moſt perfect degree; ſo that nothing ſhall be wanting to conſummate your felicity through immortal ages. The ſalvation of which thoſe who look to the Lord are aſſured, is infinitely ſuperior to that wrought by Moſes,

by

by Aaron, by Joſhua, and by all the kings and judges of Iſrael. Jehovah perfects what concerns it; having begun and carried forward this great work on earth, he conducts all his redeemed to the poſſeſſion of eternal glory; in which they ſhall never be diſturbed, and of which they ſhall never be diveſted. —Here, my brethren, is the moſt ample encouragement you could poſſibly deſire to engage you to look to Jehovah. It is not a deluſive dream, a vain conjecture, a feeble wiſh, or uncertain probability; but the explicit teſtimony of the Lord God of Iſrael, who ſaith, ye ſhall be ſaved. It is added—*For I am God* &c. By this ſolemn declaration, repeated again and again in the latter part of this chapter, God gives the ſtrongeſt ſecurity of his poſſeſſing perfect ability to relieve all the neceſſities of ruined tranſgreſſors. You are not called to truſt in one that cannot ſave, and to hope in vain for deliverance, but to confide in the only true God, who conceals not his righteouſneſs, his truth, and ſalvation from the great congregation.

23 I have ſworn by myſelf, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteouſneſs, and ſhall not return, That unto me every knee ſhall bow, every tongue ſhall ſwear.

The determined purpoſe of Jehovah is here revealed concerning the vocation, the converſion, and ſalvation of people of all nations. The apoſtle of the Gentiles, explaining this doctrine in his epiſtle to the Romans, reminds Chriſtians that were at variance, that we muſt all appear before the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, who, by dying and riſing again, is demonſtrated to be the Lord and Judge of the quick and the dead; and therefore we ought not to condemn and deſpiſe one another. To confirm his exhortation, he cites the words now before us, with ſome ſmall variation, 'For it is written, As I live, ſaith the

'the Lord *;' &c. From the paſſage now referred to, compared with that under conſideration, it is evident that when Jehovah ſware by himſelf, the oath was thus expreſſed, 'As I live, ſaith the Lord.' Sometimes he hath ſworn by his holineſs †, ſometimes by his great name ‡, ſometimes by himſelf ‖, or by his life, by his eternal majeſty, glory, and divine perfections, which are all pledged for the truth of what he ſwears. The manner in which the Almighty performed this ſolemn action is thus deſcribed, 'I lift up 'my hand to heaven and ſay, I live for ever §.' On this ſure ground reſts the infallible certainty of what is affirmed in the latter part of the verſe.

The word is gone out of my mouth, who am not a man that I ſhould lie, or the ſon of man that I ſhould repent. I have ſaid, and it ſhall be done; I have ſpoken, and it ſhall be made good. With me there is no variableneſs or ſhadow of turning, and an inviolable regard to truth; and therefore I will not fail to verify what I have ſolemnly declared ſhall come to paſs. The word is gone forth *in righteouſneſs*. What can be more equitable than that the great Lord of all, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, ſhould receive the homage and ſubjection of all his creatures. The word tranſlated *righteouſneſs* ſignifies alſo *truth* or *verity*; and in this ſenſe the meaning of the expreſſion may be, The word of truth, or in truth, is gone out of my mouth.—*And ſhall not return*. As the following declaration is juſt and true, ſo it ſhall never be reverſed. What I have ſaid ſhall neither be altered nor retracted. Whatever change may take place among men, whatever ſentiments they may hold reſpecting my word, it ſhall not return to me void and without effect, but ſhall accompliſh that which I pleaſe, and proſper in the thing whereunto I have ſent it.

Unto me every knee ſhall bow, &c. The apoſtle Paul in his epiſtle to the Philippians, treating of the

* Rom. xiv. 11. † Pſal. lxxxix. 35. ‡ Jer. xliv. 26.
‖ Gen. xxii. 16. § Deut. xxxii. 40.

exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt, as the joyful conſequence and reward of his obedience unto death, refers to the words before us *. He ſays that the Redeemer's elevation to glory was deſigned, 'that at (or *in*) the 'name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in 'heaven, and things in earth, and things under the 'earth.' Bowing the knee is well known to be an outward expreſſion of profound reſpect and ſubmiſſion; ſo that the apoſtle's words plainly intimate that Jeſus Chriſt receives univerſal homage, and that it is or ſhall be given him by the whole creation. In the moſt humble poſture, not only men of every nation and country, but celeſtial intelligences and infernal ſpirits ſhall acknowledge his power and dominion, his grace and glory. The import of our Prophet's prediction, thus illuſtrated by an inſpired writer, will be—That every intelligent creature ſhall voluntarily teſtify the lowlieſt reverence and ſubjection to the Son of God, and aſcribe glory, and honour, and bleſſing to him with their whole hearts, or be conſtrained to yield to him involuntary ſubmiſſion.—*Every tongue ſhall ſwear.* This expreſſion ſeems to allude to the practice of ſubjects who take an oath of allegiance to their ſovereign, wherein they acknowledge his royal authority, and promiſe ſubjection to him as their ſupreme earthly governor. In like manner, people of every deſcription in the kingdom of God were ſolemnly to profeſs that Jehovah is their Lord and King, and to engage to yield the obedience due to his ſovereign dominion. The words clearly intimate, that the period was approaching, in which men of all kindreds and nations diſperſed over the earth, renouncing ſuperſtition and idolatry, were to do homage to the only living and true God, and to Jeſus Chriſt, who is Lord of all; acknowledging his power to ſave and to deſtroy, they were to give him the glory due to the Saviour and Judge of the human race —That in all the kingdoms of the earth he ſhall be worſhipped; yea, that every individual ſhall own, in ſome

* Phil. ii. 10, 11.

ſome ſenſe, that he is both Lord and Chriſt: that according to the apoſtle Paul's expoſition of the words, the inhabitants of the celeſtial, terreſtrial, and infernal regions ſhall unite, either voluntarily or by conſtraint, in confeſſing his ſupreme divinity, his ſaving ability, his univerſal dominion, and the righteouſneſs of his adminiſtration.—This prophecy, which hath been in ſome meaſure fulfilled under the kingdom of the Meſſiah, in which angels, men, and devils are ſubject to the Son of God; at the final judgment ſhall receive its full completion, when his perfections, power, and glory ſhall be openly avowed by every intelligent being, to the glory of God the Father.

24 Surely ſhall *one* ſay, In the LORD have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength: *even* to him ſhall *men* come: and all that are incenſed againſt him ſhall be aſhamed.

Theſe words are a continuation of the important truth of which the eternal Jehovah, the Almighty Saviour, and ſupreme Judge of mankind hath given the moſt ſolemn confirmation. They clearly point out the way, the means, and the cauſe of the ſalvation offered to the ends of the earth. In the preceding verſe are foretold the univerſal extent of the kingdom of God our Saviour, and the unlimited ſubjection which ſhall be yielded to his authority. Among thoſe who profeſs to ſubmit to him as their Lord, there are ſome, who, deeply ſenſible that all their happineſs muſt flow from him, heartily devote themſelves to his ſervice, ſaying, In the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength. There are others, who, retaining diſſatisfaction and diſlike to him in their minds, yield only a feigned ſubjection to this mighty Lord, concerning whom it is predicted they ſhall be aſhamed. The ſentiment expreſſed by the former claſs comes firſt to be conſidered.—*Surely ſhall one ſay.* The ſubject is introduced with a word which may

may denote either the perfect certainty of the event foretold, which ſhould undoubtedly be accompliſhed in due ſeaſon—or the ſtrong confidence of faith wherewith this confeſſion ſhould be made by the people of God, and their ſteady adherence to the acknowledgment here expreſſed. If both ſenſes of the word are united, it conveys this pleaſing inſtruction, that this prophecy ſhall aſſuredly be verified, and that thoſe by whom it is fulfilled ſhall explicitly make this noble profeſſion.—*One ſhall ſay.* The word *one* is not in the original language, but ſupplied by our tranſlators, to complete what ſeems to be the obvious meaning of the prediction; namely, that every one, without exception, who bows the knee to God our Saviour, ſhall adopt the following good profeſſion. It is not the language of a party, but the unanimous confeſſion of the whole church of God under the Old Teſtament, when they were following after the law of righteouſneſs: It is alſo the acknowledgment of the ſaints under the New Teſtament, wherein the righteouſneſs of God is revealed, and of every individual in that highly favoured ſociety, of every nation, and in every age of the world, according to the different diſcoveries made to them of this truth, and in proportion to their ſeveral improvements in knowledge and in grace.

In the Lord have I righteouſneſs. The righteouſneſs which the people of God have in the Lord conſiſts in complete conformity to his holy law, which requires perfect obedience to all its precepts, and denounces death againſt every act of diſobedience. This law which is holy, juſt, and good, all mankind have violated in many inſtances, and therefore they are obnoxious to the threatened puniſhment. That men in their preſent corrupt ſtate cannot yield the obedience they owe to God, nor expiate the offences they commit, is repeatedly and plainly affirmed in the word of God, where it is explicitly declared that all have ſinned—that there is none righteous, no not one—that the whole world is become guilty before God. With

theſe teſtimonies agree the acknowledgment of the wiſeſt and beſt of men, of whom honourable mention is made in ſcripture. The truth is obvious. If mankind are under law to God, if he demands perfect obedience to the law he hath promulgated, if we are incapable of yielding the ſubjection he requires, and of expiating the guilt contracted by tranſgreſſion; then righteouſneſs cannot be attained by the works of the law, nor by any compenſation or ſacrifice we can offer. An inferior degree of love and obedience to that required in the law of the Lord, cannot be ſufficient to obtain the pardon of ſin, the divine acceptance, and the enjoyment of the favour of God; for then ſhould the Lord of life have died in vain. Nor can it be reaſonably ſuppoſed that the Moſt High requires a ſtricter compliance with his holy precepts, than he will accept as the ground of our juſtification; for then he would be pleaſed with leſs than what he juſtly claims, and pronounce thoſe to be righteous who have not obtained this character, according to the commands ſanctioned by his own authority: Then would ſome meaſure of ſinful imperfection be allowed, which need not be confeſſed, or repented of, or guarded againſt; and ſo upon this principle might become negligent and licentious; conſequently it does not appear to be a doctrine according to godlineſs, that men have righteouſneſs in any other way than in the Lord. Theſe few remarks are intended to ſhew the propriety of adopting the confeſſion.

In the Lord have I righteouſneſs. This ineſtimable benefit is enjoyed in the ſame Lord, who ſaith in ver. 22. 'Look unto me, and be ye ſaved,' *&c.* and who in ver. 23. declares, 'I have ſworn by myſelf,' *&c.*—That in him his people might have righteouſneſs he aſſumed human nature, and being found in faſhion as a man, he magnified the law of God, and made it honourable; he became obedient to the death of the croſs, and ſuffered the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God. Being himſelf

ſelf the lawgiver, he was not obliged to be ſubject to its precepts, ſo that his obedience was perfectly voluntary and infinitely meritorious. Being the Holy One who did no ſin, and in whoſe mouth there was no guile; all that he ſuffered in ſoul and body was on account of his people; for their ſakes the chaſtiſement of whoſe peace was laid upon him. In the perfect obedience, complicated ſufferings and meritorious death of Meſſiah the Prince, conſiſts the everlaſting righteouſneſs wherein the church makes their boaſt and glory.—The good confeſſion which lies before us ſuppoſes ſome acquaintance with the Lord; the obedience he performed, the ſufferings and death that he ſuſtained, deſtitute of which, neither he nor his righteouſneſs can be properly eſteemed—A humbling ſenſe of our abſolute need of this important bleſſing, reſulting from deep conviction of the divine purity, the holineſs of God's law, and our inſufficiency to obtain by our own performances, the pardon of ſin and acceptance with Jehovah. And it implies, firm reliance on the righteouſneſs of the Lord, as fully ſufficient to anſwer the demands of the divine law, to reply to the accuſations that may be brought againſt us; and to obtain all thoſe precious bleſſings requiſite to preſent comfort and everlaſting felicity. In conſequence whereof we cordially ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, which is unto all and upon all them that believe; and that never fails to produce a ſanctifying practical influence on the temper and conduct. Whilſt this method of ſalvation diſplays the immaculate holineſs of Jehovah, and gives awful views of his juſtice; it ſhews the dreadful demerit of ſin, it diſcovers the beauty and reward of obedience, and our obligations to God for favours of infinite value; it inſpires with a grateful ſenſe of his love, and conſtrains to expreſs thankfulneſs to him, by dedicating our whole lives to his honour and ſervice.—The people of God, not only need righteouſneſs to appear with acceptance

acceptance before God, but ſtrength to perform the duties of obedience. Each of them therefore readily ſubjoin,

In the Lord have I ſtrength. Even the upright among men, poſſeſs not ſpiritual ability to obey the perfect law of God, for as the apoſtle Paul acknowledged, we are inſufficient of ourſelves ſo much as to think any good thing. We are alſo naturally averſe to accept of the mercy and grace, which God ſolemnly declares he is ready to beſtow. In this enfeebled ſtate, we ſtand infinitely in need of ſpiritual ſtrength in the inner man, which conſiſts in the vigorous exerciſe of all the powers of the ſoul in the ſervice of God—in the ability of the underſtanding to diſcern aright ſacred truths, ſo as wiſely to apply them to practical purpoſes—in ſtrong inclinations to purſue the nobleſt ends by the beſt means, and in ardent affections terminating on their proper objects. This energy the people of God have in the Lord, to whom are aſcribed in ſcripture thoſe wonderful works that are the peculiar effects of omnipotence. By him all things were created that are in heaven and earth, and he upholdeth them all by the word of his power. The new creation is alſo the work of his hands, wherein he makes all old things to paſs away, and all things to become new. He ſubdues the pride of the human heart; he brings down high thoughts and lofty imaginations; he cauſes tranſgreſſors to abhor the ſins which they formerly loved, and to delight in thoſe things to which in times paſt they were averſe; he ſtrengthens them with all might for performing duty, for enduring afflictions, for reſiſting enemies, and preſerves them by his mighty power through faith unto ſalvation. For theſe and ſimiliar important practical purpoſes, he perfects ſtrength in weakneſs, and makes all grace richly to abound toward them, that always having all ſufficiency in all things, they may abound to every good work. To this mighty Lord, the head of the church, in whom all fulneſs dwells,

dwells, they have recourſe in every time of need, that he may fulfil in them all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power. And when weak they are made ſtrong in the Lord, they triumph with the royal poet, ſaying, 'The 'Lord is my ſtrength and my ſhield, my heart truſt-'ed in him and I am helped; therefore my heart 'rejoiceth, and with my ſong will I praiſe him *.'—No wonder that it is added,

To him ſhall men come. The comfortable aſſurance here given, that numerous acceſſions ſhall be made to the Meſſiah's kingdom is often repeated in the prophecies, where it is foretold that to Shiloh ſhall be the gathering of the people—that they ſhall flock to him as doves to their windows—that he ſhall be the deſire of all nations. With theſe predictions correſpond our Lord's memorable declaration reſpecting himſelf, 'If I be lifted up from the 'earth, I will draw all men unto me †.'—Coming to the Lord in whom the church have righteouſneſs and ſtrength, cannot be reſtricted to a perſonal approach to him who continued only a ſhort time on earth, and who during his reſidence among men, invited thoſe who attended his miniſtry to come to him ‡. The prediction imports, that men ſhall reſort to him as diſeaſed folk to a ſkilful phyſician for advice, that they may be relieved from trouble, and reſtored to health; or as indigent people repair to the opulent and liberal, that they may obtain the ſupply of their urgent neceſſities. They ſhall have recourſe to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in thoſe ſacred inſtitutions to which he hath promiſed his preſence, that he may heal them of their ſpiritual diſtempers, and that he may enrich them from his all ſufficient fulneſs with every needful bleſſing. What benefit can be derived from the moſt eminent abilities, or the moſt generous beneficence, unleſs people apply for aſſiſtance, and thankfully accept of the offered relief. In like manner, what advantage can men expect

* Pſal. xxviii. 7. † John xii. 32. ‡ Mat. xi. 28.

expect to receive from God our Saviour, if they do not implicitly follow his directions, and actually come to him for thoſe important bleſſings he is able and ready to beſtow?—Senſible of our wants, and convinced that he can abundantly ſupply them from his riches in glory; let us have immediate recourſe to this gracious Lord, that he may do for us beyond what we can aſk or think.

And all that are incenſed againſt him ſhall be aſhamed. The odious temper and certain miſery of thoſe who yield feigned ſubjection to the Son of God, whilſt they retain diſaffection to him in their minds, is pathetically repreſented in theſe few words. Men are incenſed when immoderately tranſported with rage, they manifeſt in various ways their abhorrence and indignation of the perſon againſt whom they are exaſperated. In this manner, ſome people are incenſed againſt the Meſſiah, who are highly diſſatisfied with the doctrine of his divinity and propitiatory ſacrifice, who are greatly offended at the method of ſalvation through his righteouſneſs and ſtrength, who virulently oppoſe the ſucceſs of the goſpel, and peremptorily refuſe to obſerve his ordinances and laws. Their inſolent language, is expreſſed in the ſecond Pſalm, 'Let 'us break their bands aſunder, and caſt away their 'cords from us.' Such malignant enemies of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, were many of the Jews, and afterward of the Gentiles, about the time of the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom. Inflamed with implacable hatred againſt him, his doctrine, and his followers, it may be ſaid of them as in the parable, 'his citizens hated 'him.' Theſe adverſaries of the Lord of life, have their ſucceſſors to this day; who ought ſeriouſly to conſider, that *they ſhall be aſhamed.* The ſame ſentiment occurred, chap. xli. 11. Shame, or inward confuſion, ariſes from a ſenſe of guilt, from diſappointment of expectations, from diſgrace and contempt. On all theſe accounts, they who are incenſed

cenſed againſt our Lord ſhall be aſhamed. They ſhall be confounded at the recollection of the guilt they have contracted by deſpiſing the Saviour, at finding their hopes entirely fruſtrated, and the ignominy with which they ſhall be treated.—Come then without delay to him who waits to be gracious, and yield to him that profound ſubjection which he juſtly deſerves and demands; and you ſhall never be confounded, world without end.

25 In the LORD ſhall all the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtified, and ſhall glory.

Two diſtinguiſhing privileges are here foretold, to be conferred on the ſubjects of Meſſiah's kingdom; who are denominated the ſeed of Iſrael. By them are meant the ſpiritual children of Jacob, who reſemble their great progenitor in piety, humility, and importunity in prayer. Concerning them, it is declared, *they ſhall be juſtified* in the Lord; they ſhall be acquitted from deſerved condemnation, and abſolved from the threatened puniſhment due to tranſgreſſion. According to the repreſentations given in ſcripture of this precious bleſſing, all their ſins are freely forgiven; they are covered, they are not imputed or reckoned to their account, they are remembered no more; ſuch full indemnity is granted, that God is ſaid to ſee no iniquity in Jacob, or perverſeneſs in Iſrael; and that there is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus. This is not all, they are admitted into the favour of God, which is better than life; they are graciouſly accepted, they are inveſted with right to all the bleſſings contained in the exceeding great and precious promiſes recorded in ſcripture, and have preſented to their view the glorious proſpect of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. This ineſtimable privilege, whereby is conſigned to them mercy, grace, and glory, with every good thing,

thing, is affirmed to be *in the Lord*, not in themſelves, or in any other perſon. They are juſtified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt; and if by grace or pure favour, then, as an inſpired writer declares, it is no more of works, which are neither the cauſe, the condition, or the motive on account of which it is conferred: For by the works of the law, ſhall no fleſh be juſtified; otherwiſe grace is no more grace; it forfeits its name, it loſes its nature; and juſtification, inſtead of being a free gift, ought to be called a reward. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, but depends on mens performances; and to them it ſhould be attributed, and not to the grace of God; otherwiſe work is no more work, but is entirely different in its nature from the idea commonly included in the word. Thus the important truth contained in the prediction before us is confirmed; the ſpiritual children of Iſrael are juſtified in the Lord, in virtue of his perfect obedience, even unto death, and in conſequence of their being intimately united to him in whom

They ſhall glory, and place all their confidence. In the Lord there is every thing whereof his people ought to make their boaſt. He poſſeſſes Almighty power, conſummate wiſdom, perfect righteouſneſs, boundleſs grace, and everlaſting faithfulneſs; through him they are juſtified, ſanctified, and ſaved; and with him they are intimately connected in the moſt indearing relations; therefore in him ſhould they rejoice and triumph. To this becoming exerciſe, repeated exhortations are given both in the Old and New Teſtaments. 'Thus ſaith the 'Lord,' by the prophet Jeremiah, 'Let him that 'glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and 'knoweth me; that I am the Lord, who exerciſe 'loving kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs in 'the earth; for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the 'Lord*.' And the apoſtle of the Gentiles intimates, that

* Jer. ix. 24.

that one great design of God in choosing the foolish, the weak, the base, and contemptible things of the world, who are considered as nothing, and giving unto them, in Jesus Christ, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, is that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that, as it is written, 'He 'that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord *.' To this Lord be glory, both now and ever. Amen.

* 1 Cor. i. 27. *et seq.*

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE third ſection of the prophetic diſcourſe which is now to be conſidered, is intended to comfort the upright ſervants of God, who fear his name; and to convince thoſe who were eſtranged from the worſhip of the true God, of their extreme folly, in order to bring them to repentance—to repreſs the arrogance of the ſceptical and the profane; and to preſerve the Jews who were captives at Babylon from idolatry, which they ſaw performed there with great pomp and ſplendor. For theſe important purpoſes, the Lord God continues his diſcourſe by our Prophet, foretelling the deſtruction of idolatry, and the idols of Babylon, which were to be carried away with great labour into diſtant countries, ver. 1, 2.—He then addreſſes the people of Iſrael who were living in exile, aſſuring them of the continuance of his favour and ſupport throughout every period of their exiſtence, ver. 3, 4. —After which he inſtructs them in the abſurdity of worſhipping images made of ſilver and gold, ver. 5—7.—Upon this repreſentation, is founded a pathetic exhortation to repentance, and the worſhip of the only true God, ver. 8—11.—This is accompanied with a ſharp reproof to the obſtinately wicked, who would not believe the fulfilment of this Prophecy, and the benefits that were to be conferred on the church, ver. 12, 13.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVI.

BEL boweth down, Nebo ſtoopeth, their idols were upon the beaſts, and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavy loaden; *they are* a burden to the weary *beaſt*.

Theſe words denounce the overthrow of Babylonian idolatry. Bel is probably a name of the ſame idol, which in other places of ſcripture is called Baal; a word that ſignifies a lord. Or it may be the contraction of Belus, who was the father of Ninus, the founder of the Babylonian monarchy; in honour of whom that image might have been erected. I pretend not to determine whether the idol ſo called repreſented the ſun, or the perſon now mentioned, who was greatly revered by the Chaldeans.—Nebo was the queen of Bel, and repreſented the moon, which in the prophecies of Jeremiah is called the queen of heaven *. The names of the great men of the eaſt were frequently compounded with theſe two words, Bel and Nebo, to intimate perhaps, their ſuperior dignity or excellence: many inſtances occur in ſcripture, as Belſhazzar, and Belteſhazzar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, Concerning the idols here ſpecified it is affirmed, that the former *boweth down*, and the latter *ſtoopeth*. At the time referred to theſe idols were to be reduced to a ſtate of ignominy and contempt, being utterly incapable of delivering either the people of Babylon or themſelves. Theſe imaginary deities which had been honoured, and confided in by a ſuperſtitious people, were to be entirely deprived of the reſpect and homage that had been given them, and conſequently conſidered merely as dead idols. This degradation was to be the certain preſage of their future downfal and deſtruction.—*Their idols were upon the beaſts*, &c. viz. The camels, the horſes, the oxen, and aſſes, employed

* Chap. xliv. 17.

ed in carrying away the idols of Babylon into Media and Perſia. Such were the immenſe ſize, the great number, and vaſt weight of theſe images, which the conquerors of Babylon were to convey into their own countries, that the animals drawing the carriages were to feel them an intolerable burden. It was anciently the practice of victorious armies to tranſport the gods of the nations which they conquered, into their own lands. This cuſtom, agreeable to the prediction before us, was to be adopted by Cyrus and his ſoldiers; who having broke down the idols they found in Babylon, they put the gold, the ſilver, and the other valuable materials whereof the images were formed, into carriages, to remove them to Media and Perſia. This they found to be a very arduous work, and oppreſſive to the beaſts of burden.

2 They ſtoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themſelves are gone into captivity.

The ſubject introduced in the former verſe is continued and illuſtrated. The idols of Babylon are the ſubject of this prediction, which is repeated to render it more forcible; and to intimate the certain approach of the foretold event. They could not eaſe the beaſts of the heavy burdens wherewith they were loaded; they could not reſcue the people of Babylon from the calamities wherewith they were oppreſſed; nor could they deliver themſelves from deſtruction. They were therefore carried into captivity, and made the ſpoil of their conquerors. —The accompliſhment of this prophecy forms a memorable event in hiſtory. After idolatry and the worſhip of images had long flouriſhed in the kingdoms of the eaſt, God was pleaſed to employ the Medes and Perſians to give a powerful check to theſe abominable practices. Theſe nations were well adapted to be the inſtruments of aboliſhing ſuch

ſuch ſuperſtitions; for they abhorred that ſpecies of idolatry, which conſiſted in worſhipping images, and had among them neither temples nor altars, which they conſidered as inconſiſtent with the majeſty of God. Having acquired the empire of Aſia, they deſtroyed the temples and idols of the kingdoms they vanquiſhed, and depoſited all that was valuable of them in their own treaſures. In this buſineſs Cyrus made great progreſs; exhibiting an inſtructive repreſentation of that ſpiritual deliverance from idolatry, which was to be effected by the promiſed Meſſiah in the fulneſs of time.

3 ¶ Hearken unto me, O houſe of Jacob, and all the remnant of the houſe of Iſrael, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb.

The Lord God having ſhewn the abſurdity of idolatry, urges his peculiar people to abſtain from the odious ſuperſtitions, of which they were in danger of being involved in a foreign country; by aſſuring them, that as he had done great things for them in times paſt, he would not reject them, but continue to exert his power and providence in their behalf. To this ſubject he demands ſerious attention. *Hearken unto me.* Liſten, give diligent heed and cloſe application of mind, to the comfortable aſſurance that I now give you of my favour and good will. This is your indiſpenſible duty, your true intereſt, and therefore you ought to incline your ears to my words, and lay them up in your hearts. To conciliate their regard, he addreſſes them with the greateſt kindneſs and affection—*O houſe of Jacob*, &c. who ſurvive the many calamities you have ſuſtained in countries diſtant from your own land, and who may now hope for deliverance by means of Cyrus king of Perſia.—*And all the remnant of the houſe of Iſrael* who remain unto this day, in whoſe behalf God hath often remarkably interpoſed. By

theſe

theſe deſignations they were reminded of the many ſignal favours, which they and their progenitors in every ſtage of their exiſtence had received, in the courſe of divine providence.—God, my brethren, not only ſpake thus to his people formerly, but he alſo ſpeaks thus to us now, who profeſs to be the ſpiritual poſterity of Iſrael his ſervant. From us he requires the ſame attention he demanded from them.

Who are borne by me, &c. The expreſſion ſeems to allude to the tender care manifeſted by a parent or nurſe toward their helpleſs infants. It plainly intimates the weakneſs of the Jewiſh people, who were incapable of preſerving and defending themſelves; that Jehovah protected them from their enemies, and extricated them from the calamities wherein they were involved; that he bore with their manifold defections and provocations; and that upon all occaſions, he never failed to exerciſe the moſt vigilant attention to their welfare and ſafety. This conſtant affection he diſcovered for them, from the earlieſt period of their exiſtence as a people. He took them from a ſtate of confinement in Egypt, and brought them forth into public view. He formed them into one political ſociety, into one eccleſiaſtical body, about the ſafety of which his kind providence was continually employed. When Iſrael was a child God loved him; when like children they were weak, fooliſh, and helpleſs, wandering in the howling wilderneſs, he took them under his ſpecial protection, he ſuffered no man to do them wrong, he carried them in the arms of his power, and bare them as on eagles wings. In the time of their youth, which was ſpent in the days of Joſhua and the Judges, Jehovah kept them from being injured by the enemies and dangers to which they were expoſed; he bare with their evil manners, and carried them all the days of old. After they arrived at maturity, at their full ſtrength and glory, in the days of David and Solomon, ſtill the Lord of hoſts was

their defence, and the God of Jacob their refuge, in whom was all the glory of their ſtrength. And even in advanced age, when they began to decay and grow infirm, in the time of ſubſequent kings, until they were carried into captivity, God did not caſt them off, but in the midſt of deſerved wrath, he remembered mercy.—Review with admiration and gratitude, brethren, the kindneſſes of God which you yourſelves have received ever ſince you had a being. He gave you life and breath, and all things. In the days of infancy when feeble and froward, he ſpared and upheld you. In the time of youth when vain and fooliſh, he ſuſtained you amidſt innumerable dangers, and preſerved you from many hurtful accidents, which might have ſnapt aſunder the brittle thread of life. After having nouriſhed and brought you up as children, and been the guide of your youth in riper years, he liberally provided for you, and crowned you with loving kindneſſes and tender mercies. It therefore becomes you thankfully to acknowledge, that from the womb until now, he hath cared for you. How cheerfully may you commit yourſelves and all your concerns into his hands, who hath hitherto dealt bountifully with you, and who will never abandon or caſt you off.

4 And *even* to *your* old age, I *am* he; and *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.

The Lord God graciouſly declares, that he would continue with the houſe of Iſrael his favour and tender care, even to the decline of their church and ſtate, when evident ſymptoms of decay and diſſolution made their appearance.—*Even to your old age—and to hoary hairs.* The Jewiſh people were now growing old in the covenant that God made with their fathers, when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. To adopt the words

words of an apoſtle, writing to the Hebrews, 'The 'covenant itſelf waxed old, and was then ready to 'vaniſh away *.' Even in the time of Hoſea the prophet, 'Gray hairs were here and there upon 'them;' indications of the approaching diſſolution of their church and ſtate were then obſervable. Among theſe may be reckoned idolatry and ſuperſtition in the worſhip of God, pride and covetouſneſs, oppreſſion and injuſtice, with manifold iniquities, diſtreſſes, and ſorrows. Theſe and other preſages of old age, were diſcernible upon them, though they knew them not. In theſe forlorn circumſtances the Almighty gives repeated aſſurance, that he would not forſake them; but afford them all neceſſary ſupport, and ſeaſonable deliverance, by three words of peculiar ſignificance—*I will bear, I will carry, I will deliver.* Previous to the delivery of theſe promiſes, he proclaims his eternal power and godhead, his rich mercy and grace—*I am he* who am invariably the ſame throughout all ages, Jehovah, I change not; and therefore the children of Jacob are not conſumed. I am he who am merciful and gracious; a faithful covenant keeping God; the dwelling place of my people in all generations; in whom your fathers truſted and were not put to ſhame; and by whom were wrought the many great deliverances of which your fathers have told you, and of which you yourſelves have been witneſſes.—I am he that hath relieved your neceſſities, that hath ſtrengthened you in weakneſs, defended you in danger, and reſcued you from the hands of your enemies. I appeal to yourſelves. Have not you on all occaſions experienced my grace and power? Did I ever command you to ſeek my face in vain? Did I ever require any thing of you that did not contribute to your beſt intereſts, or promiſe you any thing that I did not perform? Theſe circumſtances demonſtrate that I am Jehovah, the proper object of truſt and confidence, of adoration and worſhip; and ſuggeſt

* Heb. viii. ult.

ſuggeſt the ſtrongeſt encouragement to my people to hope in my mercy, amidſt all the revolutions that happen in themſelves, and in the world around them.—Another ſource of conſolation is opened in theſe words,

I have made, ſaith the great God, who formed all things. My hands made and faſhioned you; I created your bodies, theſe beautiful ſtructures, wherein reſide thoſe immortal ſpirits which I endowed with the noble powers and faculties they poſſeſs; and ſurely I will never forſake the work of my own hands, but will ſpare and pity. I have conſtituted the political and eccleſiaſtical body to which you belong, and formed you to be a peculiar people unto myſelf; a kingdom of prieſts, a holy nation, to ſhew forth my praiſes. And if you are Iſraelites indeed, I have renovated you in the ſpirit of your minds, and created you unto good works.—To you, my hearers, to as many as walk according to this rule of the holy ſcriptures, the intimate relations ſubſiſting between God and you, afford real ground of comfort. Hath he made you? then he perfectly knows every circumſtance in your condition; he is intimately acquainted with all the fears, afflictions, and ſorrows, wherewith you are diſtreſſed, and with all the bleſſings neceſſary to your happineſs. This conſideration taken in connection with your experience of the divine mercy, mentioned in the former verſe, ſhould animate you to truſt in the Lord Jehovah, who hath ſaid

I will bear, even I will carry, &c. Theſe words ſeem to allude to the caſe of a perſon bearing ſome heavy weight, which he eſteems truly valuable; and being oppoſed by ſome adverſe power, he defends and reſcues it from injury. They forcibly expreſs the gracious regard that Jehovah was to ſhew for the ſafety and comfort of his people, labouring under the preſſure of various calamities. By the care and power of his providence, he would preſerve them from ſinking under them, or becoming a prey to their enemies.

nemies. With many awful diſpenſations were they to be viſited before the diſſolution of their ſtate, ſuch as they had never experienced in former times. Though they had been often weakened and vanquiſhed, their land, their cities, their metropolis, and their temple, had never been deſolated and laid waſte. The ark had been carried away into the land of the Philiſtines, but never had any calamity befallen them like its deſtruction, with the removal of the ſacred veſſels belonging to the ſanctuary, and the bulk of the people into a diſtant foreign country. To ſupport them under their diſtreſſes, God declares—*I will bear*, under the oppreſſive load of afflictions you have to ſuſtain; I will carry you when enfeebled by infirmities and difficulties, to ſafety and tranquillity; and I will deliver you from the imminent dangers and cruel hardſhips to which you ſhall be ſubjected by your enemies, that you may ſerve the author of your mercies. Theſe promiſes, with the bleſſings they contain, are transferred to the church under the New Teſtament, and are applicable to all the ſpiritual Iſrael of God, eſpecially when in the advanced ſtages of life, and in diſtreſſed circumſtances. From them the ſervants of God in every age have derived ſupport and relief, under troubles and ſorrows. Take courage then, ye aged ſaints, when depreſſed with weakneſs, affliction, and the weight of years, when your active powers decay, your complaints multiply, your fears and anxieties increaſe, your heart and fleſh faint and fail: The Lord is pleaſed to reach you the ſtaff of his word, on which you may lean and be ſtrengthened. When you cannot ſupport yourſelves, and your friends are incapable of giving you any effectual aid, the God of all conſolation will ſend you ſeaſonable relief, and will be the ſtay of your hearts, and your portion for ever. When unable to ſuſtain the burden you feel, he will bear; when you cannot make progreſs, he will carry you forward in the way to heaven; he will deliver you from all evil,

and

and conduct you to the manſions of eternal reſt and joy. Faithful is he that hath promiſed, who alſo will perform. 'And now, O Lord, in whom I put 'my truſt, Caſt me not off in the time of old age; 'forſake me not when my ſtrength faileth, when 'I am old and gray headed; O God forſake me 'not.'

5 ¶ To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

In this, and the two verſes that immediately follow, Jehovah farther inſtructs his people in the groſs abſurdity of idolatry; and the extreme folly of imitating the abominable ſuperſtitions of the heathen. The Jews might have alledged that they ſerved not the falſe gods of the Gentiles, but the God of Iſrael; and that they uſed images when they worſhipped him, only that they might have before their eyes like other nations ſome beautiful object. This deluſive notion is here reprobated; and they were taught, that there is neither likeneſs nor equality betwixt the true God, and theſe fooliſh pretended reſemblances made of him by the hands of men. It might be ſaid, that ſome of the divine perfections are exhibited in the holy ſcriptures, under ſymbolical repreſentations; that the omnipreſence of Jehovah is ſet forth under the emblem of eyes, and his omnipotence by that of hands; and that many ſimilar figures occur in the ſacred writings. There is, however, a very great difference betwixt theſe ſymbolical images, intended to aſſiſt mens feeble apprehenſions, and the idols that were formed to be the objects of adoration and invocation, which were themſelves worſhipped. Againſt this criminal practice, the Lord God guards his people, by adminiſtring a ſharp reproof to thoſe who were guilty of this odious crime. *To whom then will ye liken me,* ſaith God? No figure whatſoever that you deviſe or execute, can afford an adequate repreſentation of

of my infinite excellence, ſanctity, and majeſty. Who in heaven can be compared unto me? who among the ſons of the mighty can be likened unto me? Among the gods there is none like unto the Lord, neither are there any works like unto his works. It is therefore impious in the higheſt degree, to pretend to make any ſimilitude of the inviſible God, and then to proſtrate yourſelves before that imaginary deity.

6 They laviſh gold out of the bag, and weigh ſilver in the balance, *and* hire a goldſmith; and he maketh it a god; they fall down, yea, they worſhip.

The proceſs of idolaters here deſcribed, is ſimple and eaſy to be underſtood, ſo as to require little illuſtration. It is evident, that theſe deluded people ſpared no expence in making, and beautifying the images which they worſhipped. For theſe purpoſes, they laid out with great profuſion large ſums of gold and ſilver, and employed the beſt tradeſmen to frame and decorate the idol; which being made, they fell down, and gave it that homage which is due to the only living and true God.

7 They bear him upon the ſhoulder, they carry him, and ſet him in his place, and he ſtandeth; from his place ſhall he not remove: yea, *one* ſhall cry unto him, yet can he not anſwer, nor ſave him out of his trouble.

How aſtoniſhing the inſenſibility and groſs ſtupidity of idolaters in all ages, not only of ancient nations, but of thoſe which exiſt to this very day; not only of ſome remote regions of America, but in India and China; beſides the abominable ſuperſtitions which are practiſed by the votaries of the church of Rome; ſome of them not leſs fooliſh than thoſe of the heathen that ſerved dead idols, which were

were carried upon mens ſhoulders. How glorioufly diſtinguiſhed from the idols honoured by the Gentiles, is the God of Iſrael, whoſe name alone is Jehovah, the Moſt High over all the earth! He is eternal, ſelf-exiſtent, immutable, ſpiritual, incorruptible, not made with hands, not ſubject to diſſolution. He bears, and he carries his people; he delivers thoſe who call upon him in the day of trouble; and being omnipotent and omnipreſent, he is always able and ready to help thoſe who truſt in him. Whereas the gods here deſcribed, were made by mens device, were deſtitute of underſtanding, incapable of moving; put into the ſtation allotted for them, they were incapable of affording aſſiſtance or deliverance to thoſe devoted to their ſervice, when in the moſt calamitous condition.

8 Remember this, and ſhew yourſelves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye tranſgreſſors.

To demonſtrate the truth of his exiſtence and perfections, the Lord God requires thoſe who had tranſgreſſed his covenant, and were in danger of being ſeduced into idolatrous practices, to call to mind the wonderful works, which in times of old he had performed for the ſalvation of his people—*Remember this*; attentively recollect the momentous truths that you have now heard, inculcating the omnipotence and tender mercy of Jehovah; who bears, and aids, and reſcues his people in thoſe ſeaſons wherein they moſt need aſſiſtance. Call to mind alſo the extreme folly and wickedneſs of idolaters, who ſerve gods that can neither anſwer their requeſts, nor ſave them when in the greateſt diſtreſs. Revolve theſe things again and again in your minds, and lay them to heart, that you may be habitually influenced by them in your temper and conduct.—*Shew yourſelves men, O ye tranſgreſſors* of the ſtatutes and judgments I gave unto your fathers. Do not act like fooliſh inconſiderate children,

dren, who are often thoughtleſs and inconſtant in the meaſures they adopt; but as becometh reaſonable creatures, endowed with ſound judgment and underſtanding, who diſcriminate betwixt truth and error, betwixt right and wrong. And if you wiſely conſider the topics recommended to your particular attention, you may be ſenſible, that there is not any thing more inconſiſtent with the reaſon and dignity of intelligent men, than to fabricate idols, and then to fall down and worſhip them; nor any thing more ſuitable to your rational nature, than ſerious reflections on the glorious majeſty, the tender mercies, and faithful promiſes of God.

9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none elſe; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me.

The tranſgreſſors of the covenant of God, are required to review his ſtupendous works, which afford illuſtrious proofs of his eternal power and godhead. The former things here intended, were the operations of Providence, whereby their fathers were brought forth from the land of Egypt, and preſerved amidſt imminent dangers; with the righteous judgments he had executed upon their enemies—Thoſe ſignal mercies, and remarkable interpoſitions, which as a people, they had enjoyed through many ages, emphatically denominated by the royal Prophet, 'his former loving kindneſſes.' Theſe things, tranſgreſſors were directed to remember, to muſe and meditate upon, until they were excited by the recollection to perform the duties which they were intended to enforce. The knowledge of them was tranſmitted from age to age. For this purpoſe, 'Jehovah appointed a law in Iſ-'rael, which he commanded their fathers, that they 'ſhould make known to their children, that the ge-'neration to come might know them, even the chil-'dren that ſhould be born, who ſhould ariſe and de-

'clare them to their children, that they might ſet 'their hope in God, and not forget the works of 'God, but keep his commandments *.' Moſes, and the other ſervants of the Moſt High, recorded theſe former things, ſabbaths and feaſts were inſtituted to commemorate, and preſerve them in remembrance; and the prophets, in their diſcourſes to the people, often called them to their minds, as powerful teſtimonies of the kindneſs, the omnipotence, and veracity of the God of Iſrael. Such, however, were the prejudices and inſenſibility of the Jews, that they did not rightly conſider the divine benefits, nor were they ſuitably affected with the awful judgments inflicted upon themſelves and other nations. They are therefore directed to conſider them as proofs of the exiſtence, the perfections, and providence of the only living and true God, the God of Jacob, beſide whom there is none elſe, and to whom there is none like.

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, ſaying, My counſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure:

Another argument is adduced to prove the divinity of the God of Iſrael, to which his people are directed to attend. It is derived from the clear predictions which he had early delivered, reſpecting future contingent events, with the circumſtances accompanying them whereof he had an accurate foreknowledge; ariſing not from penetration or probability, but from his own will and purpoſe. On this ſubject, our Prophet thus ſpeaks—*Declaring the end from the beginning.* The Lord God foretold the cauſes that were to operate, and the effects which were thereby to be produced; he predicted future diſtant events in the order and connection wherein they were to happen; the ends they

* Pſal. lxxviii. 5, 6, 7.

they were to promote, and the conſequences that were to enſue. Theſe things Jehovah by his ſervants announced from the beginning; from the early ages of the world, and nearly from the commencement of time. Enoch the ſeventh from Adam, foretold that grand event which ſhall terminate the preſent world; the coming of the Lord to the final judgment. This fragment of the prophecies of this highly honoured man of God, is tranſmitted to us by the apoſtle Jude. Noah the eight from Adam, an eminent preacher of righteouſneſs, foretold the deſtruction by water of the world that then was, 120 years before the flood. The patriarch Jacob who was ſurnamed Iſrael, in the benedictions he pronounced upon his children, foreſhewed by divine direction what ſhould befal them in the laſt days: his ſervant Moſes informed them what was to be the latter end of the Iſraelitiſh people; and by our Prophet God declared the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, with the gods which were there worſhipped. In theſe, and many other memorable inſtances, hath the truth aſſerted in the firſt part of this verſe, been exemplified and confirmed.

And from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Many things of vaſt importance, had the Lord God of old ſignified by his ſervants that were to happen, which in the days of Iſaiah were not accompliſhed; ſuch as the deſtruction of Babylon, the deliverance of the Jews from captivity, and the advent of the Meſſias to put an end to ſin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. The old prophecies however which had been exactly fulfilled, gave agreeable ſecurity that the others would certainly be verified in their ſeaſons; ſo that prophecies of both claſſes united in forming a ſtrong argument that the Lord is God, that there is none like him, nor any beſide him; that he is the governor of the univerſe, according to whoſe counſel and will all human affairs are conducted.

My

My counſel ſhall ſtand, &c. The exact foreknowledge of future events is the peculiar prerogative of Jehovah, whoſe decrees adjuſt every circumſtance relative to his creatures. No good reaſon can be aſſigned why the purpoſe of God ſhould not be effected; why his pleaſure ſhould not be executed. The counſels of men may be fruſtrated by their own natural inſtability; by their want of foreſight and wiſdom; or, by their incapacity to execute the plans they have formed. None of theſe circumſtances can defeat the purpoſe of Jehovah. He is of one mind, and who can turn him; what his ſoul deſireth that he doeth. He doeth among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, whatever pleaſeth him. He is wiſe in heart, and wonderful in counſel; no adverſe power can prevent the accompliſhment of his deſigns; for there is no wiſdom nor counſel againſt the Lord. 'The 'counſel of the Lord (ſaith the king of Iſrael) 'ſtandeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all 'generations*.' His decrees therefore are compared to mountains of braſs, to intimate their immoveable ſtability and perpetual duration.—*And I will do all my pleaſure*, both in the natural and moral world. In the natural world, I will give ſummer and winter, ſeed time and harveſt, heat and cold, light and darkneſs in their ſeaſon; and in the moral world, I will exalt and abaſe, give peace and create evil, as ſeemeth good in my ſight. What ſtriking proof hath the Moſt High exhibited of his glorious ſovereignty! After angels, probably the higheſt order of intelligent creatures had ſinned, notwithſtanding their power and dignity, he hath reſerved them in chains of darkneſs to the judgment of the great day. After men had tranſgreſſed, who perhaps are the loweſt order of reaſonable beings, he ſent his own Son into the world, that they might not periſh, but have everlaſting life. I need not multiply inſtances; in all his diſpenſations, Jehovah will do as he pleaſes;

* Pſalm xxxiii. 11.

pleaſes; none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, what doeſt thou?—Such are the illuſtrious proofs whereby the God of Iſrael eſtabliſhes his divinity, and ſhews that he is the only true God, and that beſide him there is none elſe. Convinced that he is God alone, let us adore, and love, and ſerve him, the ſupreme diſpoſer and Lord of all.

11 Calling a ravenous bird from the eaſt, the man that executeth my counſel from a far country: yea, I have ſpoken *it*, I will alſo bring it to paſs; I have purpoſed *it*, I will alſo do it.

A particular proof that the Lord is God, and that there is none like him, taken from the chief ſubject of this diſcourſe, is here ſubjoined.—By the ravenous bird, is probably meant the eagle, which hath been called the chief among the winged tribes. He is remarkable for the elevation and rapidity of his flight, even into diſtant regions, for his great ſtrength, for the quickneſs of his ſight, and for laying hold on his prey ſo ſuddenly and firmly, that it cannot eaſily be taken from him. On theſe accounts, kings and princes are compared in ſcripture to this bird. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is ſpoken of under this image, * which is doubtleſs intended here to ſignify Cyrus king of Perſia; as is evident from the words that immediately follow. This great man in ſeveral reſpects reſembled the eagle. He is celebrated for magnanimity, for the penetration of his judgment, the rapidity of his movements, his expeditions into remote countries, and his ſeizure of thoſe rich ſpoils of which he could not be deprived. Beſides, he is ſaid to have had an aquiline noſe, and the figure of a golden eagle with extended wings impoſed on his ſtandards. On theſe and other accounts this illuſtrious prince is ſpoken of in the figurative language of prophecy, as

* See Ezek. xvii. 3.

as a ravenous bird called from the eaſt, from Perſia, that was ſituated eaſtward of Canaan and Babylon. *The man that executeth my counſel*, &c. Theſe words plainly intimate, that Cyrus was the perſon intended by the foregoing figurative deſcription. God was pleaſed to honour him with the execution of his purpoſe, reſpecting the deliverance of his people from captivity, and the puniſhment of their enemies. For this end he brought him from a remote country, to be the principal agent in effecting that important work. To give certainty to the event, it is added, *Yea, I have ſpoken*, &c. I have foretold its accompliſhment, and I will aſſuredly bring it to paſs, notwithſtanding every obſtruction that may ſeem to lie in the way of its execution.

12 Hearken unto me, ye ſtout hearted, that *are* far from righteouſneſs:

Solemn attention is demanded to an important admonition from thoſe proud and obſtinate people, who refuſed to give credit to the promiſes of God, containing the precious benefits to be conferred on the church. The Lord God vouchſafes to addreſs them under the deſignation which they juſtly deſerved, that they might know his perfect acquaintance with the diſpoſition of their minds, notwithſtanding they artfully endeavoured to conceal their diſſimulation; and that he might bring them to a better temper than they had hitherto diſcovered. The character given them is that of *ſtout hearted*, fierce, audacious, and haughty. Raſhly imagining that they were ſuperior to the bulk of mankind, confiding in their abilities, and inſenſible of their depravity, they imbibed falſe principles, and became confirmed in erroneous ſentiments, which pride and vanity would not permit them to retract. Stubborn and intractible, they obſtinately perſiſted in incredulity, and diſobedience to the word of God; they would not receive his teſtimony, they would not

not ſubmit to his government, nor obſerve his ordinances. No threatening intimidated them, no promiſe or mercy ſoftened their obdurate hearts; but proceeding from evil to worſe, they ſtrengthened themſelves in their wickedneſs, they became impudent and ſtout-hearted. Another ingredient in their character is—*Far from righteouſneſs.* Unaffected with the rich diſplays that God had given of his clemency and compaſſion, of his dread diſpleaſure againſt ſin and his love of righteouſneſs, they not only continued proof againſt all the evidences whereby the truth is ſupported, but they were enemies of all righteouſneſs, and addicted to the practice of various kinds of iniquity. They were far from poſſeſſing integrity and truth; for they withheld from God that ſupreme affection, that firm reliance, and that homage of obedience, which he juſtly demands. Nor did they diſcover that unfeigned love of their brethren which the love of God fails not to produce. Under the power of unbelief, they attained not the law of righteouſneſs, and were very far from the hope and fruits of righteouſneſs; peace, conſolation, and joy.—Though in this miſerable ſtate, the mighty God the Lord directs his ſervants not to overlook or contemn; but affectionately to addreſs them, and to demand their ſerious attention. *Hearken unto me.* Give ear unto the words of my mouth; hear, O my people, and I will teſtify unto thee; O Iſrael, if thou wilt hearken unto me. Hear inſtruction; be wiſe, and refuſe it not; hear and underſtand; conſider and lay it to heart, and know it for your good.—What tender mercy in God, to ſend his ſervants to ſpeak particularly to thoſe who were ſtout hearted, who deſpiſed his warnings, threatenings, and promiſes, and abuſed his meſſengers; and, after all their ſtubbornneſs and unrighteouſneſs, to make trial if they will liſten to his voice and be obedient!—Take heed then, brethren, that you act not like thoſe proud incorrigible people who anſwered the prophet Jeremiah, ſaying, 'The word

that

'that thou haſt ſpoken unto us in the name of the 'Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; but we will 'certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of 'our own mouth *.' Such perverſity would render the word of God, which is the ſavour of life unto life, the ſavour unto you of death unto death.

13 I bring near my righteouſneſs; it ſhall not be far off, and my ſalvation ſhall not tarry: and I will place ſalvation in Zion for Iſrael my glory.

This verſe contains the admonition to which Jehovah demanded attention, from perſons of the above deſcription. The righteouſneſs of God here ſpoken of, may denote the glorious perfections of the divine nature. And as this eſſential attribute of Jehovah is richly manifeſted in the redemption of his people, which diſplays his conſummate rectitude, goodneſs, and faithfulneſs; it may comprehend the typical deliverance of the Jews from captivity at Babylon, and the great ſalvation accompliſhed by the Son of God, which it prefigured. Both theſe deliverances are founded on the righteouſneſs, the grace, and veracity of Jehovah, which require the fulfilment of the promiſes made to the fathers; and to each of them there may be reference in this expreſſion, God brought near his righteouſneſs, and exhibited it to view in the temporal, and eſpecially in the ſpiritual ſalvation he effected for his church. Though in your imaginations you may place it at a vaſt diſtance; or ſuppoſe that it ſhall never be revealed, yet be aſſured *it ſhall not be far off.—And my ſalvation ſhall not tarry.* At the time theſe words were delivered, the period was at no great diſtance, wherein the Jewiſh people were to be reſcued from captivity, as a happy prelude to the ſalvation of God, which was to be made known to all nations. The time fixed for its accompliſhment was then alſo faſt approaching; no unneceſſary delay was to be made, ages

* Jer. xliv. 16, 17.

ages were quickly to glide away; and after the ſtream of time had run through a few generations, ſalvation was to make its appearance.

And I will place ſalvation in Zion. I will give deliverance from exile and bondage to the inhabitants of Zion, and reſtore them to the poſſeſſion of their own land, where they ſhall enjoy liberty and happineſs. And I will work a far more complete and glorious ſalvation for my church typified by Zion; there I will place it, as its proper reſidence, in which it ſhall for ever abide, for the benefit *of Iſrael my glory*; to whom I have manifeſted my glory, among whom I have inſtituted my worſhip, which is their glory; in whom I am glorified, and by whom my glory ſhall be advanced. The truths contained in this verſe are expreſſed in an inſtructive variety of terms which, tho' of ſimilar import, yet each repreſents ſomewhat different from the other, and ſuggeſts ſome circumſtance that contributes to give a more enlarged view of the ſubject, and ſerves to enhance the value of the bleſſings foretold.—In the temporal deliverance that God wrought for his people of old, let us contemplate the image of the more glorious ſalvation he hath placed in his church, whereof we are invited by the goſpel to participate. And whilſt with humble gratitude we enjoy temporal mercies and deliverances, as the fruits of undeſerved goodneſs, let our deſires and aims chiefly terminate on that great ſalvation which compriſes deliverance from the bondage of corruption, from ſpiritual enemies, from the puniſhment of tranſgreſſion, and from all evil; which advances to the enjoyment of the moſt glorious privileges and proſpects, and in every ſtate imparts true conſolation and joy.—'Bleſſed be the 'Lord God of Iſrael from everlaſting to everlaſting; 'and let all the people ſay, Amen. Praiſe ye the 'Lord *.

* Pſal. cvi. 48.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE fourth ſection of the prophetic diſcourſe which we are now briefly to illuſtrate, was primarily intended to adminiſter conſolation to the people of God who were harſhly treated and cruelly oppreſſed; to aſſure them of ſpeedy deliverance from the tyranny of their adverſaries, and of the awful vengeance that was to be executed upon them; and to convey inſtruction to the inveterate enemies of the church of God, by repreſenting the juſt judgments to which they expoſed themſelves, who having laid aſide all regard to the divine glory and the proſperity of the ſervants of Jehovah, endeavoured with inflexible rigour to haraſs and diſtreſs them. It ſeems evidently to have been deſigned to convince the people of Babylon of their atrocious wickedneſs; of the vanity of their diviners, in whoſe prognoſtications they confided; and the impotency of the idols which they ſerved. For theſe purpoſes, directing his diſcourſe to the Babylonians, our Prophet proceeds to announce the overthrow of their mighty empire which was celebrated for its defence, its power, riches, and ſplendor: intermixing with the denunciation of divine judgments, the delineation of the cauſes which contributed to bring upon them the predicted direful calamities, v. 1—4.—He then more particularly deſcribes the judgments to be inflicted, with the ſeveral crimes which united their influence in terminating the exiſtence of their kingdom, v. 5—11.—After which he addreſſes them in ſarcaſtical language, calling them to aſk counſel and aſſiſtance from the ſoothſayers and aſtrologers, in whom they had placed their confidence, v. 12, 13.—The chapter concludes with a moving repreſentation of their utter incapacity to afford relief, with the miſerable end of all thoſe who exerciſe curious arts, v. 14, 15.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVII.

COME down, and ſit in the duſt, O virgin, daughter of Babylon, ſit on the ground: *there is* no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou ſhalt no more be called tender and delicate.

Iſaiah begins this portion of his diſcourſe by exhibiting Babylon deprived of her empire and glory, and reduced to a very depreſſed and humble condition. He addreſſes her in the name of the God of Iſrael, under this deſcription—*O virgin, daughter of Babylon.* The citizens of Babylon, the ſeat of extenſive empire, are certainly intended. The firſt part of this deſignation ſerves to intimate their ſoundneſs and liberty, their beauty and accompliſhments, their dignity and grandeur, their delicacy and effeminacy, together with their ſolicitude to preſerve untainted, their honour and reputation—The other is no leſs juſt and well founded; for the bulk of the inhabitants of that kingdom and metropolis were born, nouriſhed, and educated in that country or city, where they grew up to maturity and reſpectability, and many of them became ornamental and uſeful to the ſocieties to which they belonged.—*O daughter of the Chaldeans.* For the ſame reaſons the people of Chaldea are called the daughter of that kingdom, whoſe metropolis was Babylon. They are required to deſcend from the throne, ſovereignty and dominion, they had long poſſeſſed; from the honour and influence they had enjoyed; and to ſit in a low afflicted and ſorrowful condition, in which they were to remain. This great city was to be ſo thoroughly ſpoiled and deſolated, that many, even thoſe of the higheſt rank who were left in it, ſhould be obliged to ſit on the ground, and there to bemoan their diſtreſſed ſtate—*For thou ſhalt no more be called tender and delicate.* The words allude to the ſtate of

of a young lady of the royal or ſome noble family, who abſtains from all manner of labour with her hands, who will ſcarcely touch the ground with her foot, who lives in eaſe and luxury, and is accuſtomed to the greateſt delicacy. They plainly intimate, that the inhabitants of Babylon and Chaldea, who had enjoyed the conveniencies and luxuries of life, were to be deprived of theſe advantages, and to ſuffer a total change in their circumſtances, by being reduced to meanneſs, hardſhips, and ſervitude.

2 Take the milſtones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, paſs over the rivers.

The abject ſervile condition, and laborious employments of the citizens of Babylon, are here pointed out. Women were generally employed in the eaſt in grinding the corn with hand-mills, which was eſteemed a mean and moſt toilſome work. That you perform the taſk aſſigned you with the greater eaſe and vigour—*Uncover thy locks*, as people frequently do when they engage in hard labour, which requires great exertion, and by which they are apt to be much heated and fatigued. *Make bare the leg, uncover the thigh.* Lay aſide every unneceſſary garment that might incumber you in executing the arduous taſk aſſigned to you, and in paſſing through the waters that you may have to ford on various occaſions. The expreſſions taken together, emphatically repreſent the very great change that was to take place in the condition of the Babyloniſh women, who had lived in luxury and delicacy. They were not only to be bereaved of the affluence and pleaſures they formerly enjoyed, but they were to be forced into a ſtate of the loweſt ſervitude by the Medes and Perſians, remarkable for their pride and cruelty. Diveſted of their elegant dreſs and ornaments, they were to be obliged to betake themſelves to hard labour, and to ſubmit to the meaneſt offices, which

which could not be done, unleſs by diſcovering thoſe parts which they had been accuſtomed to conceal.

3 Thy nakedneſs ſhall be uncovered, yea, thy ſhame ſhall be ſeen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as* a man.

The ignominious contemptible ſtate to which they were to be reduced, is farther deſcribed. In performing the ſevere ſervices in which they were to be employed, thoſe parts of the human body that were wont formerly to be covered with much neatneſs and elegance, were to be diſcloſed to open view. Every perſon hath ſomewhat which may properly be called his nakedneſs or ſhame, in a figurative ſenſe, ſuch as a weak judgment, imprudence, inconſideration, injuſtice, cruelty, avarice, poverty, or contempt of religion. Over that he ſtudiouſly endeavours to throw a veil, that it may be preſerved from public obſervation. Now when the covering is taken away by which any of theſe things were concealed, then peoples nakedneſs or ſhame, is laid open to the inſpection of thoſe who poſſeſs penetration and diſcernment. In this ſenſe of the words, they foretold the reproach and contempt wherewith the inhabitants of Babylon were to be viſited.—*I will take vengeance*, &c. The God of Iſrael explicitly declares, that he would execute the terrible judgments he had denounced. Vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he will repay recompenſe to his adverſaries in a manner ſuited to his infinite majeſty, and the atrocious crimes they have committed.—*And I will not meet thee as a man*, whoſe compaſſion may induce him to ſhew ill judged forbearance and clemency; but thou ſhalt have judgment without mercy who haſt ſhewed no mercy. I will not meet thee with the juſtice of a man, that may be perverted; but with that impartial equity which can neither be corrupted nor evaded. I will not meet thee

thee with the anger of a man, which for certain reaſons, may be concealed or deferred; but with my fierce wrath that ſhall inevitably conſume thee; for wrath bringeth the puniſhment of the ſword, that ye may know that there is a judgment. I will not meet thee with the ſtrength of a man, that may be oppoſed or vanquiſhed; but clothed with omnipotence that cannot be reſiſted; ſo that it ſhall appear that it is not the vengeance of man, but of God.—Let us beware then of indulging in delicacy, and abuſing the bleſſings we enjoy, leſt we provoke God to deprive us of them, and puniſh us for our ſin and folly.

4 *As for* our Redeemer, the LORD of hoſts *is* his name, the Holy One of Iſrael.

The church is here introduced exulting in God as their Saviour, who preſerves and delivers them not by human power, but by the arm of his omnipotence. Whilſt their adverſaries have reaſon to be overwhelmed with conſternation and dread, at the awful threatenings denounced againſt them; the people of God have cauſe to triumph in the intimate relations wherein he ſtands connected with them.—As for our Redeemer, who hath engaged to reſcue us from the hands of our enemies, to plead our cauſe, to avenge our blood, and to advance us to proſperity and happineſs; he is the Lord of hoſts, who ruleth in heaven and earth; who muſtereth the armies of battle; who giveth deliverance and victory to whomſoever he pleaſeth. No weapon therefore that is formed againſt us can proſper; ſalvation is of the Lord, and it becomes us with gratitude and joy to celebrate his power, grace, and faithfulneſs. 'In the greatneſs of thine excellency, thou haſt overthrown them that roſe up againſt us *.'—We exult alſo in this mighty Redeemer as the Holy one of Iſrael, who is righteous in

* Exod. xv. 6.

in all his ways, and holy in all his works; who hath ſet us apart for himſelf, that we may ſhew forth his praiſes; who ſanctifies us, and who is ſanctified by us. We may then certainly conclude that he will accompliſh the promiſes he hath given us, and exert his power in our behalf.

5 Sit thou ſilent, and get thee into darkneſs, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou ſhalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

Babylon is invited to bemoan in ſilence and obſcurity, the dreadful calamities wherewith ſhe was to be viſited. In the beginning of this chapter, the inhabitants of that great city were called to bewail their degradation from a ſtate of dignity and affluence, and their having fallen into meanneſs and contempt. Here they are introduced in a deſolate condition, and directed to mourn and lament over the grievous judgments they were to ſuffer. Sorrow naturally wiſhes to give itſelf vent in ſolitude and obſcurity, where its effects cannot be obſerved. Hence in the Lamentations, Jeremiah having acknowledged that the Lord had brought him into darkneſs; he ſaith of the man that beareth the yoke in his youth, 'he ſitteth alone and keepeth ſilence.'* The reaſon why the inhabitants of Babylon were required to be ſilent in darkneſs, is ſubjoined in the following words—*For thou ſhalt no more be called a lady of kingdoms.* She was no longer to enjoy the honourable and elevated rank which ſhe poſſeſſed under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, when ſhe held a very extenſive influence over many kingdoms; over Syria, Phœnicia, Egypt and Arabia, &c†. Theſe nations were treated by her as handmaids or ſervants: to her they looked up as to their miſtreſs, and according to her commands they regulated their movements. By the execution of the judgments

* Chap. iii. 28. † See Jer. li. 25.

ments above denounced, the people of Chaldea were to be for ever cut off from power over other kingdoms, and diveſted of their former pomp and grandeur. They were to be brought into ſubjection to the Medes and Perſians, in conſequence whereof, thoſe who lived in delicacy and ſplendor, were to fall into obſcurity and indigence.

6 ¶I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didſt ſhew them no mercy; upon the ancient haſt thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

If it is inquired what were the cauſes which contributed to bring down upon Babylon the ſevere judgments of heaven. To this queſtion a full reply is given in this and the verſes that immediately follow. The firſt mentioned, and one of the chief, was their cruelty toward the people of God. The Lord God of their fathers was wroth with Judah, becauſe their kings had done evil in his ſight; becauſe the chief of the prieſts and the people, tranſgreſſed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the houſe of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jeruſalem—They alſo mocked his meſſengers, and deſpiſed his words. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees who ſlew them with the ſword, and them that had eſcaped he carried away to Babylon, where they were ſervants to him and his ſons *. In this manner did God teſtify his juſt diſpleaſure againſt the Jewiſh people.—*I have polluted mine inheritance.* The poſterity of Iſrael were God's inheritance, on account of his ſpecial claim to them, and peculiar care about them. Notwithſtanding they profaned his ſabbaths, his ſanctuary, and his ordinances; therefore did God pollute them by the moſt debaſing diſtreſſes, and delivered them

* See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14. *et ſeq.*

them into the hands of their enemies who ſhewed them no mercy, but with unrelenting rigour afflicted and oppreſſed them.—*Upon the ancient haſt thou very heavily laid thy yoke.* Inſtead of pitying the aged under their infirmities, and of treating with gentleneſs thoſe who had been advanced to political and eccleſiaſtical offices; the king and people of Babylon behaved toward perſons of all ages, and of all ranks with the ſame tyranny and ſeverity. They did not commiſerate the ſtate of their captives; they did not act toward them with clemency and compaſſion, with humanity and moderation, but with mercileſs cruelty *. What horrid barbarity was ſhown to king Zedekiah, whoſe ſons were ſlain before his eyes, then his eyes were put out, after which he was bound with fetters of braſs and carried to Babylon †. King Jechoniah was confined for thirty-ſeven years in priſon ‡. And as for the people, you may ſee their complaint, Jer. xxxi. 34.—Though the Lord God ſharply chaſtiſed the Jewiſh people for their aggravated tranſgreſſions, ſtill he was kindly affected toward them, and diſcovered tender regard for their intereſt, as is evident from the predictions before us.

7 ¶ And thou ſaidſt, I ſhall be a lady for ever: *ſo* that thou didſt not lay theſe *things* to thy heart, neither didſt remember the latter end of it.

Another cauſe of the calamities inflicted on the people of Babylon, was their intolerable pride, and carnal confidence in their proſperity, which they boaſted was to continue throughout all generations. Though changes are conſtantly taking place in all human affairs, and in the governments of this world; thou haſt vauntingly declared, that ſuch is thy ſtability; that thy power and grandeur ſhall never have an end.—*Thou didſt not lay theſe things to thy*

* See Lam. iv. 16. † 2 Kings xxv. 7. ‡ ver. 27.

heart, or properly conſider the tranſitory uncertain nature of all ſublunary things, and the fluctuating condition of the greateſt empires that ever exiſted on the face of the earth; that however permanent they appeared for a time, yet by ſome means or other they ſoon decayed and periſhed. Had you called to mind this obvious truth which your vanity and inſenſibility hath induced you to diſregard, you would not have fooliſhly imagined that your city and kingdom could flouriſh, and preſerve their vigour and influence throughout all ages. This vain-glorious language proceeds from pride, confidence in the external means of your preſervation, and groſs inattention to the hiſtory of mankind.—*Neither didſt remember the latter end of it*, that your city ſhall certainly be buried in ruins, and that your kingdom ſhall be entirely overthrown; that your pride and truſt in your own power and fortreſſes, ſhall bring upon you terrible deſolation and dreadful divine judgments.—The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity. How different are mens apprehenſions oft-times reſpecting their preſent and future condition, from the ſentiments they ought to entertain on ſubjects, very important and intereſting to their happineſs.

8 Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleaſures, that dwelleſt careleſsly, that ſayeſt in thine heart, I *am*, and none elſe beſide me; I ſhall not ſit *as* a widow, neither ſhall I know the loſs of children:

The third procuring cauſe of the deſtruction of Babylon, was the luxury, voluptuouſneſs, and ſecurity of its citizens; crimes that are odious in the ſight of God, and ſeldom fail to bring down awful judgments on thoſe who indulge in them. That the inhabitants of that great city might be ſenſible of the righteouſneſs of Jehovah in their puniſhment, and that they ſuffered nothing but what they deſerved;

ved; he calls upon them to attend to the vices to which they were ſhamefully addicted. Your inconſideration and forgetfulneſs of approaching ruin, renders it now neceſſary for you ſeriouſly to hearken to the information I am about to communicate. —*Thou that art given to pleaſures*, to luxury and delicacy. This character of ancient Babylon in ſome meaſure belongs to the chief cities of all extenſive flouriſhing empires, wherein are vaſt multitudes of inhabitants, many rich and great men, with plenty of all kinds of the beſt proviſions. The fine ſituation of the metropolis of Chaldea, the wealth of her citizens, the magnificence of their buildings, the hanging gardens, with other circumſtances, contributed to cheriſh their fondneſs for pleaſures; to which, as hiſtorians teſtify, they were remarkably addicted. Indulgence in pleaſure begets ſecurity. —*That dwells careleſsly*. The prodigious walls, the ſtrong fortifications whereby the city was defended, ſeemed to human view to render it invincible, and impoſſible to be won by force or aſſault. Confidence that the city was encompaſſed with an impregnable defence, ſet the inhabitants free from fear of danger, and made them bid defiance to an invading enemy.—*That ſayeſt in thine heart*, that thinkeſt and judgeſt—*I am and none elſe*, &c. The expreſſion reſembles the ſublime character which Jehovah aſſumed, chap. xlv. 5. where he thus ſpeaks, 'I am the Lord and there is none elſe; 'there is no God beſide me.' Its meaning ſeems to be, that there was no city or empire in the world equal, or comparable to Babylon. At that period there were exiſting many reſpectable kingdoms, ſuch as thoſe of the Medes, the Egyptians, &c. but all of them were inferior in extent, opulence, power, and grandeur, to that which was emphatically denominated 'the beauty of the Chaldees excel-'lency *.' This haughty language plainly intimates that Babylon claimed independent exiſtence, unrivalled

* Chap. xiii. 19.

unrivalled perfection, invincible ſtrength, and endleſs duration; that like the prince of Tyre, her heart was lifted up becauſe of her riches, and that ſhe had ſet her heart as the heart of God.—It is added *I ſhall not ſit a widow.* The people of Babylon boaſted of the perpetuity of their city and empire, which they vainly imagined ſhould never be deſtitute of a monarch and princes, to cheriſh and ſupport, to direct and defend them; nor ever ſenſibly feel the loſs of citizens, who were conſidered as the children of the city.—Mark, brethren, the fatal effects of the inordinate indulgence in ſenſual pleaſure, eſpecially when accompanied with ſecurity and haughtineſs of ſpirit. It diminiſhes induſtry, frugality, temperance, and œconomy. It introduces indolence, luxury, effeminacy, diſcontent, and contempt of religion, evils which are the bane of ſociety: It enervates the ſtrength of a people, it renders them weak and contemptible, and an eaſy prey to their ambitious neighbours. And above all, it brings down the righteous judgments of Almighty God, as it did upon Babylon.

9 But theſe two *things* ſhall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loſs of children, and widowhood: they ſhall come upon thee in their perfection, for the multitude of thy ſorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine inchantments.

The citizens of Babylon were to be viſited by thoſe direful calamities which they leaſt expected, and which they boaſted were never to befal them. The righteous God often puniſhes men in the very thing wherein they ſinned, and renders the matter of their vain-glory the mean of their puniſhment. A remarkable inſtance of this ſort lies now before us. Babylon was confident that ſhe ſhould never ſit a widow and ſee the loſs of children. Both of theſe

theſe calamities were to come upon them ſuddenly and unexpectedly *in a moment*. If their condition was in this manner to be reverſed, they might have imagined that theſe evils would overtake them at different periods. This our Prophet denies, affirming that both ſhould come upon them *in one day*. They might have encouraged themſelves with hopes of ſome mitigation of their diſtreſſes, that though ſome of the principal perſons in the city and empire were cut off, yet others might be left who would fill their places. To let them know the vanity of ſuch expectations, they were informed that both the bereavements mentioned were to come upon them *in their perfection*.—The exact accompliſhment of this prediction, may be ſeen in the hiſtory of the overthrow of this great city and empire by Cyrus king of Perſia, to which I have had repeatedly occaſion to refer. The reaſon of this deſolation is immediately ſubjoined.

For the multitude, &c. The ſorceries intended, were the charms, exorciſms, and pretended miracles, whereby the people were ſeduced to idolatry; the numberleſs artificial methods employed to retain them, in the practice of the moſt abominable ſuperſtitions, to poiſon and deſtroy them. Inchantments were thoſe ſurpriſing things, which were affirmed to have been done by a ſupernatural influence; the interpretation of omens of different kinds by thoſe who ſaid they had intercourſe with ſerpents and demons. Of theſe magical arts, to which the Chaldeans and other eaſtern nations were much addicted, there were a great multitude, ſuch as we at this diſtance of time and place cannot enumerate. Theſe things, were highly offenſive to the Lord God, and brought down upon the inhabitants of Babylon, the awful judgments here denounced againſt them *.

10 ¶ For thou haſt truſted in thy wickedneſs

* This ſubject is finely illuſtrated by Newton in his Diſſertations on the Prophecies, vol. 1.

edneſs: thou haſt ſaid, None ſeeth me, thy wiſdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee, and thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I *am*, and none elſe beſide me.

Another cauſe of the deſtruction of Babylon, is here ſtated and ſhortly illuſtrated. The firſt article ſpecified in the charge, is expreſſed in theſe words—*Thou haſt truſted in thy wickedneſs.* Had ſhe been arraigned with having confided in her own ſtrength, great as it was, the charge would have been heavy; for Jehovah hath pronounced them curſed that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh their arm; but the crime ſhe had committed was ſtill more atrocious; ſhe had confided in her wickedneſs; in her ill gotten wealth and power, in her treachery, oppreſſion, tyranny, and cruelty. They had inriched themſelves with the ſpoils of the Jewiſh people; they detained them long in captivity; nay, they are repreſented as making the earth to tremble, as ſhaking kingdoms, making the world a wilderneſs, deſtroying the cities thereof, and not opening the houſe of their priſoners. In this wickedneſs they truſted, as exhibiting a proof of their unrivalled greatneſs, and uncontrolled dominion—*Thou haſt ſaid, None ſeeth me.* None obſerves my wickedneſs and injuſtice, my oppreſſion and cruelty, and other enormous crimes, that hath right or power to call me to account, and to inflict puniſhment. This atheiſtical temper the Pſalmiſt David informs us, prevailed in his time. Men encouraged themſelves in villany, and every ſpecies of tranſgreſſion, by the vain perſuaſion that God did not regard their conduct. 'They ſay, the Lord ſhall not ſee; 'neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard *.' A ſimilar diſpoſition manifeſted itſelf in the ancients of the houſe of Iſrael, in the time of the prophet Ezekiel. They ſaid, 'The Lord ſeeth us not; he hath forſaken

* Pſal. xciv. 7.

ſaken the earth *. Such was their ſcepticiſm, that they denied the divine omnipreſence; ſuch was their infidelity, that they requeſted not his aſſiſtance; and ſuch was their haughty inſolence, that they charged God with having deſerted this world; and that he allowed people to think, and ſpeak, and act as they pleaſed. And ſuch was the proud blaſphemous language of the citizens of Babylon.

Thy wiſdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee. Thy political knowledge, thy craft and cunning diſplayed in the adminiſtration of thy affairs, particularly in reducing to ſervitude, and in the moſt iniquitous manner detaining in captivity the inhabitants of Judea, and of other countries—This bad policy which thou haſt adopted, hath perverted, or as the Hebrew word ſignifies, hath turned thee out of the right way; it hath elated thee with pride, made thee forget thy dependant condition, and neglect to attribute all thy proſperity and ſucceſs to divine Providence.—*And thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I am, and none elſe beſide me.* The heavy charge laid againſt Babylon in ver. 8th of this chapter is again repeated, to give it the greater energy and weight, and to intimate the atrocity of the crime here ſpecified. By this preſumptuous language, did Babylon arrogate to herſelf the high character and peculiar prerogative of Deity, and incurred the dreadful judgments of the Almighty.—Let us beware of ſpeaking and acting as ſhe did, of boaſting of our abilities, of truſting to ourſelves, and of aſcribing our ſucceſſes to our own prudence and ſagacity, leſt we participate with her in her plagues.

11 Therefore ſhall evil come upon thee; thou ſhalt not know from whence it riſeth, and miſchief ſhall fall upon thee; thou ſhalt not be able to put it off; and deſolation ſhall come upon thee ſuddenly, *which* thou ſhalt not know.

The

* Chap. xviii. 12.

The terrible puniſhment, is deſcribed in theſe words, which was to be inflicted on Babylon on account of her complicated wickedneſs. The predicted calamity is repreſented as a great ſtorm, which ſuddenly ariſes in ſome eaſtern countries, and blows with ſuch violence as to ſpread devaſtation and ruin wherever its fury extends. In like manner, divine judgments were unexpectedly to ſeize upon thoſe who were guilty of the crimes above mentioned, and irreſiſtibly to overwhelm them in irretrievable ruin—*Thou ſhalt not know from whence it riſeth.* Notwithſtanding their political wiſdom and aſtronomical knowledge, the threatened evils were not to be foreſeen by them, they were not to perceive the cauſes from which they proceeded, the quarter from which they came, nor the time wherein they were to be inflicted.—*And miſchief ſhall fall upon thee*, &c. like a horrible tempeſt which thou ſhalt not be able to avert, or eſcape, or by any means to evade; the miſeries determined to lay thee waſte by the righteous Lord of the univerſe ſhall ſeize upon thee.—*And deſolation ſhall come upon thee*, &c. Another circumſtance relative to the threatened deſtruction, is here noticed; namely, the ſuddenneſs of its approach, with the ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment to which it ſhould give riſe. It was to come unexpectedly, when the citizens of Babylon were in profound ſecurity, inſenſible of impending danger. Then their deſolation came in as an overflowing flood, that ſweeps away every thing within its reach; and their deſtruction, as a whirlwind that ariſes in a moment, and ſpreads aſtoniſhment and terror wherever it comes.—The hiſtory of this event, perfectly accords with this prophecy. The calamity which fell upon Babylon, was inflicted by means of the Perſians, from whom no danger ſeems to have been apprehended. Though the operations and intentions of Cyrus employed in beſieging the city could not be unknown to the inhabitants, yet were they quite ignorant of the way whereby

whereby the invading enemy were to get within the walls, and nothing that they leſs dreaded in the fatal night wherein they were beyond meaſure ſurprized with the threatened miſchief that ſuddenly befel them.

12 Stand now with thine inchantments, and with the multitude of thy ſorceries, wherein thou haſt laboured from thy youth; if ſo be thou ſhalt be able to profit, if ſo be thou mayeſt prevail.

Our Prophet addreſſes in ſarcaſtical language the proud city and empire of Babylon, who gloried in their aſtronomical knowledge and magical arts, in order to convince them of their vanity and utter inſufficiency to their preſervation. In the name of the God of Iſrael, he calls upon them to bring forth their diviners, ſoothſayers, and perſons of this ſort of every denomination, to try if by their curious devices they could afford them any aſſiſtance in the day of diſtreſs. Employ your charms and ſpells, your ſorceries, witchcrafts, and magical arts, to which you have been greatly addicted, and which you have aſſiduouſly cultivated, from the early period in which your city and kingdom began to flouriſh, and to acquire ſtrength and celebrity among the nations. Bring to your aid all the ſkill in divination, that after long ſtudy you have attained, and try if in the preſent alarming criſis it can afford you any real benefit, by protecting you from the hoſtile deſigns of your enemies, and giving you conqueſt and victory.

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counſels: let now the aſtrologers, the ſtargazers, the monthly prognoſticators, ſtand up, and ſave thee from *theſe things* that ſhall come upon thee.

Diſappointed, and unable to obtain relief from the deliberations and advices of thy wiſe men, who have been employed in collecting their obſervations, that they might aſſure thee of the continuance of thy proſperity, thou haſt waited in vain for the favourable events they taught thee to expect.—*Let now the aſtrologers*, &c. On the preſent emergency, call forth to your aſſiſtance thoſe who with great attention have ſtudied the planets, that from their poſition and aſpect they may foretel the future deſtiny of perſons, cities, and kingdoms; and let them exert all their ſkill and abilities in your favour. The contemplation of the ſtars, and the other celeſtial orbs, for the purpoſe of prognoſticating things to come, is reprehended by the prophet as a ſinful practice, which tends to withdraw mens dependence from God. and to place their confidence on uncertain appearances that are continually varying. Indeed all the viſible works of God, eſpecially the heavens that declare his glory, ought to be diligently contemplated and admired; that men may be induced to adore their great Creator and Lord, who hath ſtretched out ſuch a glorious canopy over the earth, enlightened by innumerable luminaries, ſhining with incomparable luſtre and brilliancy. They ought to be accurately viewed, even as a careful obſerver looks at an elegant manſion, that he may diſcern its ſymmetry, grandeur, and conveniencies, and diſcover the abilities of the Architect by whom it was reared. But to gaze at the heavenly bodies, to acquire from them a knowledge they were not intended to impart, was the ſin and folly of thoſe who are here mentioned.—The only character that requires to be noticed were the monthly prognoſticators, who pretended, from the ſituation and appearance of the moon, to foretel the events that were to happen during the currency of that month. Perſons of the ſeveral deſcriptions here given, are called to ſtand up and ſave Babylon from threatened judgments—in a poſture of readneſs

to

to give direction as to thoſe meaſures that might preſerve her from impending deſtruction. Since they preſumptuouſly imagine they can effect your deliverance, and reſcue you from danger by their policy and power, let them try if by their united efforts, they can reſcue you from calamity. If they cannot maintain you in ſafety, then know that the God of Iſrael alone is Jehovah the Moſt High over all the earth, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy.

14 Behold, they ſhall be as ſtubble; the fire ſhall burn them; they ſhall not deliver themſelves from the power of the flame: *there ſhall* not *be* a coal to warm at, *nor* fire to ſit before it.

Attentively conſider the miſerable condition to which perſons of the above deſcription ſhall certainly be reduced.—*They ſhall be as ſtubble*, which is reckoned of no value, and of little uſe; ſo that they ſhall be proper fuel for the fire to conſume. —*The fire ſhall burn them.* Divine judgments, which are here ſignified by the well known emblem of fire that burns the combuſtible materials that are caſt into it, ſhall ſuddenly ſeize upon them, and entirely devour them. Their deſtruction ſhall be terrible, tormenting, and irreſiſtible.—*They ſhall not deliver themſelves*, &c. They ſhall not be able by their charms and magical arts, to extricate themſelves from irretrievable ruin, to ſtop deſolating judgments, to eſcape, or remove the miſeries that ſhall come upon them. All their devices and efforts ſhall prove as ineffectual to preſerve them from threatened calamities, as to prevent the rain from falling on the earth. —*There ſhall not be a coal.* The fire ſhall burn with ſuch violence as entirely to conſume them, and none of them ſhall remain to ſerve any uſeful purpoſe. After the period referred to, thoſe who profeſſed to be aſtrologers, ſorcerers, and prognoſticators, loſt their reputation and influence, whilſt their

their deluſive arts were exploded and condemned. And though among the Perſians, the Greeks, and the Romans, there were ſome who continued to practiſe theſe ſciences, they were conſidered by wiſe and judicious men as falſe and inexplicable.

15 Thus ſhall they be unto thee with whom thou haſt laboured, *even* thy merchants from thy youth: they ſhall wander every one to his quarter; none ſhall ſave thee.

In the ſeaſon of danger and diſtreſs no manner of benefit was to accrue to Babylon from ſoothſayers or merchants, two claſſes of citizens which were moſt deeply intereſted in her proſperity. The miſerable fate of thoſe who ſtudied and practiſed divination, who for a long time had been cheriſhed, reſpected, and applauded by the inhabitants, hath been already announced. And as to mercantile people who reſided among them, and had acquired great wealth—*They ſhall wander every one to his quarter.* Thoſe who eſcaped from the general deſolation were every one to ſhift for himſelf: diſcovering no ſolicitude about the public welfare, each was to conſult his own ſafety; all were to flee in various directions to the places where they once reſided; or hoped to find ſome friends or connections. Even thoſe who in time paſt were reſpected and honoured, ſhould with great precipitation, betake themſelves to flight.—Enough hath been ſaid on this ſubject, which I ſhall conclude, after having ſaid a few words.

Whilſt the prophecy we have been conſidering indubitably refers to ancient Babylon, delineates the cauſes which contributed to reduce it to ruins, and the overthrow of that great city by the Medes and Perſians; may we not conſider it as predicting the fall of myſtical Babylon under the New Teſtament? Beſides its literal fulfilment, it may have a more full accompliſhment, in the diſcriminating characters

characters and terrible overthrow of the great city, that is figuratively ſo called. The learned Dr Hurd, Biſhop of Worceſter, in his Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, ſpeaking of the Reformation of long oppreſſed, and much adulterated religion, obſerves *, This important work was begun and proſecuted on the common principle, that the Biſhop of Rome was Antichriſt, and the great ſeparation from the Church of Rome was every where juſtified on this idea, that Rome was the Babylon of the Revelations; and that Chriſtians were bound by an expreſs command in thoſe prophecies to come out of her communion.—Why then (ſays he †) was ſuch an emblem employed? The reaſon is obvious. It was becauſe Babylon was the firſt of all idolatrous cities, and the fitteſt to emblematize the enormous guilt, or to ſet in full light the extenſive influence of idolatrous Rome. For each in its turn was the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; the former corrupting the heathen world, and the latter the Chriſtian. If then, with the celebrated Vetringa, we apply this prophecy to Babylon under the New Teſtament, we have not only a graphical deſcription of her wickedneſs, but a remarkable prediction of her deſolation and complete overthrow. In this proſpect, whilſt others bewail her ruin, let us be prepared to obey the ſummons given by the apoſtle John in the Revelations ‡. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, ye celeſtial inhabitants, and ye holy apoſtles and prophets, ye moſt diſtinguiſhed, honourable characters in the church, for God hath avenged you on her.—And let us unite with the great voice of much people, ſaying, 'Alleluia; ſalvation, and glory, and honour, and 'power, unto the Lord our God; for true and 'righteous are his judgments §.'

PRELI-

* Vol. II. p. 37. of the 4th edit. † P. 169. ‡ Chap. xviii. 20. § Chap. xix. 1, 2.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE fourth diſcourſe contained in the fourth book of Iſaiah's prophecies, which is recorded in the chapter that lies now before us, is compoſed of two diſtinct parts. Having eſtabliſhed the divinity of the God of Iſrael, by the accompliſhment of the predictions anciently delivered by his ſervants, which gave evidence that thoſe more recently announced reſpecting the overthrow of Babylon, and the captivity of the Jewiſh people, would be fulfilled in due ſeaſon—Our Prophet proceeds in the name of God ſharply to reprove the obſtinate unbelieving Jews, who were ſtrongly inclined to idolatry, notwithſtanding they obſerved the rites inſtituted in the worſhip of the true God. For this purpoſe, he correctly delineates their temper and character, and ſpecifies ſeveral cauſes which contributed to render them very reprehenſible, and criminal in the ſight of God, ver. 1—8.—He then aſſures them, that notwithſtanding they were to be thrown into the furnace of affliction as the juſt puniſhment of their ſins, that he might purify them from their iniquity; he would reſcue them from calamity, and thereby diſplay his own glory, ver. 9—11.—After which, he addreſſes them in a more mild and gentle manner, admoniſhing them, that the rejection of his truths, and the diſobedience of his laws, brought upon them the ſevere judgments with which they were to be viſited, ver. 12—19.—Having directed them to leave Babylon at the time of their liberation, and to return to their own country, he declares they ſhould enjoy the bleſſings of his goodneſs, whilſt the wicked and incorrigible were deſtitute of all true comfort and felicity, ver. 20, to the end.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLVIII.

HEAR ye this, O houſe of Jacob, which are called by the name of Iſrael, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which ſwear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Iſrael, *but* not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs.

Iſaiah pathetically addreſſes the Jewiſh people, ſolemnly demanding their cloſeſt attention to what he was to deliver. They are denominated by various characters, ſuitable to the deſign of our Prophet, on the preſent occaſion. He begins with their well-known extraction, of which they often boaſted —*O houſe of Jacob*, on whom the Lord God conferred many ſignal proofs of his diſtinguiſhing favour; the renowned progenitor from whom you are deſcended.—*Who are called by the name of Iſrael*, to whom God himſelf was pleaſed to give this deſignation, becauſe, as a prince he had power with him and prevailed, to obtain the bleſſing; a memorable circumſtance, which ought to have induced you to reſemble your illuſtrious anceſtor in temper and conduct.—*And are come forth of the waters of Judah*, who was the chief among his brethren, and to whom belonged the privilege of primogeniture. Judah is here elegantly repreſented as a fountain from whence his poſterity iſſued, as the ſtreams proceed from the ſpring in which they take their riſe. —*Who ſwear by the name of the Lord*, ſolemnly invoking him as your witneſs and judge when entering into covenant with him, and obſerving thoſe ſacred rites whereby you profeſſed to be of the ſame religion with your fathers.—*And make mention of the God of Iſrael* in your public feſtivals and frequent ſacrifices, and on other ſolemn occaſions in which you celebrate his praiſes, as infinitely powerful,

ful, excellent, and glorious; and as your God, the great founder, preſerver, and deliverer of your nation. —*But not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs.* All this ſpecious profeſſion, highly honourable to the Jewiſh nation, was, however, conjoined with baſe hypocriſy and diſſimulation. Their public reverence for the true God was an aſſumed deluſive appearance. Their heart was not right with God, they were unſtedfaſt and perfidious in his covenant; they were not found in his ſtatutes. Inſtead of truſting in Jehovah, they confided in their own performances; inſtead of aſcribing the benefits they enjoyed to the unmerited goodneſs of God, they attributed them to their own merits; and indulged thoſe criminal diſpoſitions which were inconſiſtent with integrity and uprightneſs before God, who requires that his ſervice be performed in truth and righteouſneſs.—*Hear ye this.* To you who are of this deſcription I direct my diſcourſe. Place yourſelves in a hearing poſture, that the intenſe application of your minds may be diſcovered in your attitude and geſtures. Liſten with diligence and candour to the reproofs I adminiſter, the arguments I adduce, the duties I inculcate, and the aſſurances that I give you. Hearken now to the word of the Lord, if, perhaps, your obdurate hearts may be mollified, your conſciences convinced, and your converſion from your evil ways happily effected.—The demand that Iſaiah made upon his countrymen, I make upon you, brethren, who enjoy ſuperior advantages to the children of Iſrael, who, like them, profeſs to be the people of God; though, alas! the charge of inſincerity may be brought againſt not a few. Hear this counſel, and receive inſtruction, that you may be wiſe in your latter end. And may God open your ears to diſcipline, and command that you return from iniquity.

2 For they call themſelves of the holy city,

* Job xxxvi. 10. *& ſeq.*

ty, and ſtay themſelves upon the God of Iſrael; the LORD of hoſts is his name.

The character given in the former verſe is here illuſtrated and confirmed—*For they call themſelves*, &c. Jeruſalem was the holy city which the Lord God was pleaſed to appropriate to himſelf, in which he choſe in a ſpecial manner to reſide; where ſtood the temple, the throne of his glory, honoured with his gracious preſence; and where the ſolemn ſervices of his worſhip were performed. Thither the tribes of Jacob went up to the teſtimony of Iſrael, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; hence it had the name of the holy city. The perſons who were primarily addreſſed called themſelves of this holy city, publicly profeſſing that they were the worſhippers of the true and living God, who was there honoured and extolled.—*And ſtay themſelves upon the God of Iſrael.* They pretended to put their truſt in the Lord Jehovah, the Governor of the univerſe, to have recourſe to him in every emergency, and to implore his help who is the gracious deliverer of his people.—*The Lord of hoſts is his name.* He created, he ſupports, and governs all the innumerable armies of creatures in heaven and earth; and employs them in executing his wiſe and gracious purpoſes. Notwithſtanding he mercifully delivered them from dangers and diſtreſſes, they were unthankful, and diſobedient; and after being reſtored to tranquillity and ſafety, they plainly ſhewed by their conduct, that they were urged by neceſſity and not by choice, to ſupplicate the divine interpoſition. Such was the odious temper and practice of many among the Jews during the period wherein our Prophet exerciſed his miniſtry; in conſequence of which they proudly rejected his diſcourſes, they vilified his predictions, and treated with contempt his ſalutary admonitions. Living, however, under the good government of a pious prince, they profeſſed the religion of their country.—In order to

reach conviction to their minds, they are informed by this animated addreſs, that the privileges they enjoyed, under the covert of which they indulged in malice and hypocriſy, were to them of no real importance or utility, when ſeparated from integrity and righteouſneſs, eſſential to the character of Iſraelites indeed, and true citizens of Zion—that the prerogatives which they highly extolled, if not joined with uprightneſs, humility, and holineſs, were of no avail in the ſight of God; and that unleſs they repented, the advantages they poſſeſſed would greatly aggravate their condemnation—that if they gloried in their fathers, they ought to follow their good examples, to imitate the faith, the truſt, and patience of Jacob, the well known generous diſpoſition of Judah—that if called by the holy city, they ought to prove their citizenſhip, by the ſanctity of their manners—and that if they made mention of the name of the Lord, this ſhould be done in truth and righteouſneſs. Hence all the epithets uſed in the verſes we have been conſidering are evidently intended, not only to enforce compliance with the call to ſerious attention, but to give greater energy and weight to the following reproof.

3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I ſhewed them; I did *them* ſuddenly, and they came to paſs.

The firſt argument here brought forward to eſtabliſh the deity of the God of Iſrael, is taken from the prophecies delivered by his ſervants in ancient times, reſpecting improbable fortuitous events which had actually happened. This proof, adapted to the meaneſt capacity, which demonſtrated at once the ſupreme divinity of Jehovah, and the divine miſſion of our Prophet, was with great propriety adduced for the conviction of the ſceptical, hypocritical and profane. It exactly accords with the maxim

maxim delivered by Jeremiah the prophet, which is unqueſtionably juſt and true, 'When the word of 'the prophet ſhall come to paſs, then ſhall the pro-'phet be known that the Lord hath truly ſent him*.' The former things that God revealed by his ſervants, were fulfilled in their ſeaſon, the events exactly correſponding with the predictions. Of this ſort were the memorable deliverance of the poſterity of Iſrael from bondage in Egypt, their being put in poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan, with others of a more recent date. There might be alſo a peculiar reference to ſome remarkable occurrences, of which Iſaiah's hearers had been witneſſes; ſuch as the overthrow of Sennacherib's army that beſieged Jeruſalem, which he had clearly foretold, and that was well known to the men of Judah. Theſe and other things that God had foreſhewed, *he did ſuddenly*, in a manner altogether unexpected by many, and at a time wherein they were little thought of.—*And they came to paſs*, (notwithſtanding the impediments that lay in the way of their accompliſhment) by the exertion of his omnipotence, who thereby demonſtrated his eternal power and godhead.

4 Becauſe I knew that thou *art* obſtinate, and thy neck *is* an iron ſinew, and thy brow braſs.

One important end for which God predicted the future fortunes of his people was, that by ſhewing his perfect foreknowledge of things to come, he might convince the perverſe and ſceptical among them, that he is the only living and true God. Many of the Jewiſh people were averſe to believe the truths made known to them; they were inflexibly bent upon evil, they were prone to backſlide, to murmur, to commit idolatry, to be unthankful, to be vain of their external privileges, and to run into ruinous courſes, from which they would not eaſily be

* Chap. xxviii. 9.

be reclaimed. With their odious tempers and practices, the Moſt High was perfectly acquainted; for, ſaith he, *I knew that thou art obſtinate*, or *hard*, as the Hebrew word is rendered in the margin of ſome bibles: ſtubbornly attached to erroneous ſentiments, which no arguments can induce thee to retract; tenacious of bad principles, addicted to falſe reaſonings, and corrupt practices; that thy heart is obdurate and impenetrable, repelling the force of truth, reſiſting the means uſed to mollify it, and the good impreſſions they are intended to produce. And becauſe ſentence againſt thy evil works hath not been ſpeedily executed, thy heart hath been fully ſet in thee to do evil; thou art become froward and perverſe, diſregarding the admonitions and directions of my ſervants.—*And thy neck is an iron ſinew.* This expreſſion, like many others in ſcripture, which refer to the human body, muſt not be literally, but figuratively underſtood, as relating to the heart. It alludes to the ſtate of one, the muſcles of whoſe neck, by ſome means or other, are ſo contracted and hardened, that with great difficulty he can look about to the perſon who calls to him from behind. It ſtrongly intimates the ſtubborn perverſe diſpoſition of the Jewiſh people, who are deſcribed by Moſes and the prophets, as obſtinate, ſtiff-necked, and extremely reluctant to comply with the will of God.—*And thy brow braſs*, which does not change its colour, but always retains the ſame appearance. They did not bluſh on account of the errors they had maintained, or the ſins they had committed; nor did they grow pale with fear on account of the divine judgments denounced againſt tranſgreſſors which they incurred. They ſhewed a firm determined impudent countenance, that indicated the hardneſs and impenitence of their hearts. Such was the unrelenting diſpoſition of the people among whom our Prophet exerciſed his office, which exhibited a ſtriking repreſentation of thoſe who perſiſt

fiſt in oppoſing the word and Spirit of God, and ſtill refuſe to hearken to reproof.

5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to paſs I ſhewed *it* thee; leſt thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

To perceive the propriety of that part of the divine conduct toward his people, which is here delineated, I ſuppoſe it may be ſufficient to paraphraſe the words that point out the deſign God had in view by ancient prophecy. From an early period of time, (ſaith God) I clearly foretold by my ſervants, the events which afterwards came to paſs; for the expreſs purpoſe of giving you ſatisfying proof of my omniſcience and omnipotence; and to convince you that I am God, and that there is no God beſide me. Had theſe things been done by the idols you have ſerved, or in obedience to their authority, you would thereby have been confirmed in your idolatrous practices. But as they and their votaries have been altogether ſilent, as to future contingent events that have come to paſs, and my ſervants have foretold thoſe of them which were moſt remarkable, that have happened preciſely according to their predictions; this circumſtance ought to be conſidered as an unqueſtionable evidence of my divinity.

6 Thou haſt heard, ſee all this; and will not ye declare *it?* I have ſhewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didſt not know them.

Thou haſt often heard with thine ears the predictions publiſhed by my ſervants, which have been punctually verified.—*See all this* to which I now refer

refer come to paſs, as the fulfilment of the prophecies that have been delivered for your conviction. And as you cannot deny the intimate correſpondence of the events with the predictions, will you perverſely refuſe to acknowledge that any connection ſubſiſts between them. If the reality of both are granted; then you ſhould candidly confeſs, that you are obliged to aſcribe to me the praiſe and glory due to my eternal godhead.—*I have ſhewed thee new things*, &c. reſpecting the deliverance of the Jewiſh people from captivity at Babylon, by means of Cyrus king of Perſia, and have pointed out many circumſtances relative to that event, and the extenſive conſequences with which it ſhall be attended—*Even hidden things*, &c. that were kept ſecret in my counſels and decrees, laid up in ſtore with me, and ſealed up among my treaſures *.—*And thou didſt not know them*, nor hadſt the leaſt intimation of their approach, until they were revealed and made known to you, in obedience to my command.

7 They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardeſt them not; leſt thou ſhouldeſt ſay, Behold, I knew them.

The things that were concealed in the purpoſe of Jehovah, until the period wherein Iſaiah exerciſed his miniſtry, were then, and not before, brought into certain future exiſtence, by the powerful word of God. The predictions delivered concerning them, placed their cauſes, circumſtances, and conſequences, in ſuch a clear light, that they could not be conſidered as imaginary, but as things real and certain—*And not from the beginning*. The exiſtence they were to derive from the prophetic word of Jehovah, was not from the commencement of time, nor from the early period wherein the poſterity of Iſrael

* Deut. xxxii. 33.

Iſrael were formed into a nation and church.—*Even before the day, when thou heardeſt them not;* or, as the Biſhop of London hath well tranſlated the Hebrew words, 'And before this day thou haſt 'not heard them.' The reaſon why they were ſo long concealed and not foretold, with other things, in the early periods of time, is ſubjoined in the following words—*leſt thou ſhouldeſt ſay, behold, I knew them.* By my own penetration and foreſight, I perceived that the affairs alluded to would certainly take place; my knowledge is not derived from divine revelation or prophecy, but from my own diſcernment and ſagacity. To give check to ſuch preſumptuous language, the things ſaid to have been now created were kept ſecret from the beginning.

8 Yea, thou heardeſt not, yea, thou knoweſt not, yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldeſt deal very treacherouſly, and waſt called a tranſgreſſor from the womb.

Theſe words illuſtrate and confirm what our Prophet had aſſerted, *viz.* that the Jewiſh people had not the leaſt information reſpecting the events he had foretold, until God was pleaſed to reveal them.—*Yea, thou heardeſt not,* &c. Thou didſt not diligently hearken and attentively conſider the predictions delivered by the prophets, and compare them with the events to which they referred; nor didſt thou ever learn any thing more of the ſubjects whereof they treated, than what was conveyed by their diſcourſes.—*Yea, thou knoweſt not,* &c. Thou didſt not rightly underſtand the prophecies that were delivered; nor didſt thou become acquainted with the important objects to which they were intended to lead forward the mind; nor yet didſt thou deduce from them thoſe conſequences which thou ſhouldſt have inferred.—*Yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened.* From the memorable

morable day wherein I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, thine ear hath been ſtopt by ignorance, incredulity, carnal prejudices, and worldly affections; ſo that the word of God did not reach thine heart, and make proper impreſſions on it. Thou haſt not rightly underſtood, believed, and obeyed the diſcoveries of the will of God wherewith thou haſt been favoured; and the effect hath been, that thou haſt been ignorant, inattentive, and diſobedient.

For I knew that thou wouldeſt deal very treacherouſly. The Lord God had perfect foreknowledge of the treachery and perfidy of the Iſraelitiſh nation; that they would not keep his teſtimonies as they promiſed; that they would deal unfaithfully with him, and turn aſide like a deceitful bow—that though they profeſſed much love to him with their mouths, their heart would be far from him—that though they made many prayers, their hands would be full of blood; and—that they would be guilty of deteſtible hypocriſy in his ſervice. Notwithſtanding, he ſent to them his ſervants with the moſt important ſalutary inſtructions, that were admirably adapted to rouſe, convince, and ſanctify.—*And was called a tranſgreſſor from the womb.* From their earlieſt exiſtence as a nation they tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord. At the Red Sea in the wilderneſs, and after they entered the land of Canaan, they diſbelieved the word of God; they diſtruſted his providence, they forgat his mighty works, they were unmindful of his mercies. In theſe and many other inſtances, they ſhewed that they juſtly deſerved the character here given to them.—Theſe words which were addreſſed to the people of Judea, may be applied to us. Are we better than they? No, in no wiſe, as to our temper and behaviour toward God. The ſame cauſe uniformly produces the ſame or ſimilar effects. The ſame froward diſpoſition which they diſcovered with reſpect to divine inſtruction, is too evident in the conduct

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of many among us to be denied. Some do not even attend to the word of God, and the miniſtrations of his ſervants. Others notwithſtanding the advantages they enjoy, are but little acquainted with ſacred truths; their ears are ſtopped by fooliſh prejudices, and frivolous objections againſt divine revelation; ſo that they do not underſtand the things freely given us of God. All of us have in ſome meaſure dealt deceitfully with God, and multiplied our tranſgreſſions againſt him. Though God clearly foreknew and obſerved theſe things, ſuch are the riches of his mercy to us-ward, that he continues to afford us the means of knowledge and grace.

9 For my name's ſake will I defer mine anger, and for my praiſe will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

Our prophet having endeavoured to convince his countrymen of their obſtinate incredulity and perverſity of diſpoſition, which juſtly merited ſevere judgments, proceeds to ſhew, that ſuch is the clemency and tender mercy of Jehovah, that he would greatly mitigate the puniſhment to be inflicted. Inſtead of denouncing terrible things in righteouſneſs, God declared by his ſervant, that *For my name's ſake I will defer.* The name of God may here denote the glorious excellencies which he poſſeſſes, with the honour and majeſty of his government. The expreſſion may import, that to manifeſt his clemency and mercy, and peculiar favour toward thoſe whom he had appropriated to himſelf as the objects of his protection and care, he would delay the execution of deſerved vengeance. It might have ſeemed repugnant to his amiable character and mild adminiſtration, to have rejected thoſe whom he had aſſumed into intimate relation to himſelf, and to have made them feel not merely the temporary effects of his diſpleaſure, but the terrible permanent conſequences of his fierce anger. He would not therefore

therefore ſuffer his divine attributes, that had been highly celebrated by the children of men, and which had hitherto ſhone with refulgent ſplendor and glory to be eclipſed in the ſight of the nations—nor would he permit his reputation as the ſupreme gracious Ruler of his people to be injured; leſt men might have apprehended that it was not a deſirable privilege to be ſubjects of his kingdom. Having for a long time conferred upon the Jewiſh people many ſignal marks of his ſpecial regard, it was not conſiſtent with his benignity, wiſdom, and faithfulneſs, to abandon and deſtroy them. On theſe and other accounts, he delayed to inflict upon them the dreadful calamities, to which by their ſins, they had expoſed themſelves, and of which early warning was given them by Moſes, and the other prophets of the Lord. And when the period arrived in which it became neceſſary to execute deſerved judgments, God is repreſented as puniſhing them with reluctance, and coming out of his place to bring to paſs his act, his ſtrange act.

And for my praiſe will I refrain, &c. Beſide the ſacred regard that God ever ſhews for his great name, he manifeſts proper reſpect for augmenting the revenue of praiſe which is due to him by his peculiar people. Honour and glory and thankſgiving are the tribute he juſtly demands from them, for the rich diſplays of his mercy, patience, and forbearance; and ſuch is the high value he puts upon theſe acknowledgments, that they are here mentioned as one reaſon why God ſaith, *I will refrain.* I will mitigate the ſeverity of my judgments, and intermix with them many mercies, whereby they ſhall be greatly alleviated. I will not ſtir up all my wrath, but remember that you are fading fleſh, a wind that paſſeth away and cometh not again. In the midſt of deſerved wrath, I will not forget my former loving-kindneſs; I will not deal with you as you have ſinned; I will puniſh you leſs, far leſs than your iniquities deſerve. At the time to which this

this prophecy referred, the Lord God in righteouſneſs might have ſwept them away with the beſom of deſtruction, whereas he only ſent them into captivity at Babylon for their benefit; and whilſt ſome of them ſuffered greatly, others in great meaſure were exempted from calamity. Though the inhabitants of Judea were ripe for divine judgments; yet God refrained himſelf, and did not viſit them with deſolation, and the curſe in all its extent. He ſpared and cut them not off.—In the ſame manner God hath graciouſly dealt with us, who by multiplied and enormous tranſgreſſions have abuſed his mercies, trampled upon his ſacred authority, and made light of the riches of his grace. Hitherto he hath deferred his anger, and refrained himſelf. He hath tried every mean to reclaim us from our evil ways; he hath conferred ineſtimable bleſſings on the obedient, and threatened awful judgments to the impenitent. Deſpiſe not the riches of his goodneſs, forbearance, and long-ſuffering; but with admiring views of the divine patience, endeavour faithfully to improve the ſeaſon of our merciful viſitation.

10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with ſilver; I have choſen thee in the furnace of affliction.

The Lord God calls the attention of his people to the gracious deſign he intended to accompliſh, by the afflictive diſpenſations wherewith they were to be viſited.—*Behold, I have refined thee.* In this and ſimilar expreſſions uſed by the prophets, there is an obvious alluſion to the employment of thoſe who by means of the furnace, ſeparate precious metals from the refuſe wherewith they are intermixed. In reference to this operation, God promiſes by the prophet Zechariah, 'I will refine them as ſilver is 'refined, and will try them as gold is tried*.' And ſpeaking

* Chap. xiii. 9.

ſpeaking of the advent of the Meſſenger of the covenant by the prophet Malachi, he declares, that this illuſtrious perſon 'ſhall ſit as a refiner of ſilver, 'and he ſhall purify the ſons of Levi, and purge 'them as gold and ſilver, that they may offer unto 'the Lord an offering in righteouſneſs *.' By means of ſanctified afflictions God ſeparates the precious from the vile, and disjoins his peculiar people from the errors, the corruptions, the hypocriſy, and wickedneſs wherewith they had been blended. He makes manifeſt the truth of their holy profeſſion, and their entire devotedneſs to his ſervice; he renders conſpicuous the real beauty and excellence, whereby they are clearly diſtinguiſhed from nominal and hypocritical profeſſors of religion. Never do the ſervants of God appear to higher advantage, than after they come forth from the fiery trials they have undergone Their ſincerity is demonſtrated; their faith is found unto praiſe and honour and glory; their patience hath had its perfect work; and their reſignation to the divine good pleaſure hath been ſubſtantially expreſſed. Indeed all the graces that adorn their character are rendered more vigorous and active; and ſhine with increaſing luſtre in the eyes of all poſſeſſed of ſpiritual diſcernment. When therefore God ſaith, I have refined thee, he declares to his people, that by ſending them into captivity at Babylon, he deſigned to purify them from the enormous tranſgreſſions to which they were addicted, and to ſeparate them from the unbelieving, the profane, and the hypocritical, with whom they were intermixed, who ſhould be exterminated from his church.—This important work he was to perform, not with ſilver, not in a furnace ſo ſtrongly heated as is neceſſary to purify that metal from its droſs, but only in ſuch meaſure as ſhould ſuffice to accompliſh the end he had in view. Or not for ſilver, as the Hebrew word may be rendered, *i. e.* on account of any temporal conſideration whatſoever

* Chap. iii. 3.

ver —How ineſtimable this privilege in which we, brethren, ought to be ſolicitous to participate! To be purified from iniquity, that dangerous odious diſtemper, which deforms, enfeebles, diſables, and deſtroys vaſt numbers of mankind, is a benefit of the higheſt importance. If in mercy we are delivered from all ungodlineſs, and cleanſed from all unrighteouſneſs, a happy change is effected; a better appearance than ever will be aſſumed, and real excellence will be exhibited and acknowledged.

I have choſen thee in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is ſignificantly repreſented in ſcripture as a furnace which is uſed for melting gold, ſilver, and other metals; to diſunite them from the refuſe with which they are incorporated, that their value, beauty and utility, may be aſcertained, and that they may be adapted to the purpoſes for which they are intended. In like manner, affliction is employed by infinite wiſdom to mollify the hearts of God's people, to purify them from the droſs of corruption and the pollution they have contracted; to form them into the mould of his word, and impreſs upon them more deeply the divine reſemblance. They are put into this furnace to make trial of their ſincerity and conſtancy, to diſcover the reality and ſtrength of divine grace; and that they may be better prepared for every good work. The various calamities that befel the Jewiſh people, were mercifully intended to promote theſe valuable purpoſes, with reſpect to the upright and faithful among them. They ſuffered the loſs of their property, which became a prey to their enemies; they were deprived of their friends, who fell by the ſword; they were bereaved of their liberty, being carried away captive into a ſtrange land; they were excluded from the ordinances of divine worſhip and the temple of God, which was buried in ruins; beſides being expoſed to innumerable hardſhips from their cruel oppreſſors. In this furnace

furnace of affliction God declared—*I have choſen thee.* Whilſt they were tried by the calamities above mentioned, God manifeſted to themſelves and others, that he had ſelected them to be his peculiar people, by the ſupport he afforded them, by the wonderful deliverance he wrought for them, and by the good effects which their affliction was to produce. For long time God had tried, without ſucceſs, to mollify their obdurate hearts, to reclaim them from ſin, and to render them obedient to his holy law, by favourable interpoſitions of his providence. At the time referred to, he was to try them by other methods, that were to have a more happy termination, and the good fruits ariſing from their ſucceſsful operation, ſhould give evidence, that they were the choſen objects of God's peculiar love and care.—The manifold advantages reſulting from ſanctified afflictions to the people of God, ought to induce us who profeſs to ſuſtain this character to bear them with patience and ſubmiſſion, with fortitude and magnanimity. And let us be ſolicitous and importunate in prayer, that through the divine bleſſing they may excite juſt indignation againſt ſin; that they may exerciſe and improve in us the graces of the Spirit, render us partakers of God's holineſs, and bring forth the fruits of righteouſneſs, peace, and joy.

11 For mine own ſake, *even* for mine own ſake, will I do it: for how ſhould *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

For the ſame reaſon that God defers his anger, he refines and manifeſts his choice of his peculiar people; namely, for his own ſake—to diſplay his glorious excellencies; that ſo they may be highly extolled and celebrated, his mercy in forgiving, his power in delivering, his wiſdom in deviſing the beſt means

means for this purpoſe, and his faithfulneſs in fulfilling his promiſes—to maintain unſullied the honour and glory of his character and government in the world, that ſo they may be admired and eſteemed throughout the wide extent of his dominions. This argument always prevails with God, to preſerve his people from deſtruction, and to cauſe his tender mercies ſpeedily to prevent their ruin when they are brought very low. It hath, therefore, been often uſed in the prayers of his ſervants, eſpecially when the intereſts of his church were apparently low, and they were reduced to forlorn circumſtances by their enemies. A remarkable inſtance of the truth of this remark occurs in Pſal. lxxix. 9. 'Help us, O God of our ſalvation, (ſaid 'the church), for the glory of thy name; and de-'liver us, and purge away our ſins, for thy name's 'ſake!' And he granted them help and deliverance, not on account of their prayers or their righteouſneſs, but he ſaved them for his own name's ſake *. —*For how ſhould my name be polluted.* The name of God is polluted when it is not acknowledged and ſanctified as moſt honourable and excellent, but ſlighted and irreverently uſed; and when occaſion is given to the wicked to ſpeak evil of God and his ways. Though the Jewiſh people juſtly deſerved deſtruction from God, yet he ſpared them for the honour of his name, and to prevent their enemies from profaning and abuſing it. Memorable to this purpoſe are the words of Jehovah, recorded Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. 'I ſaid I would make 'the remembrance of them to ceaſe from among 'men, were it not that I feared the wrath of the e-'nemy, leſt their adverſaries ſhould behave them-'ſelves ſtrangely,' &c. The Almighty perfectly knew, that had he employed their enemies to puniſh his people at their pleaſure, they would have been malicious, cruel, and vindictive; and that though 'he was but a little diſpleaſed, they would

'have

* See Pſal. cvi. 8.

'have helped forward the affliction *.' God was therefore pleased to defer his anger, and to purify his servants by means of affliction proportioned to their circumstances, that his name might not be polluted.—*And I will not give my glory unto another.* People are prone to ascribe to themselves, to second causes, or to the gods whom they serve, the advantages they possess, and the success that attends their undertakings; and thus to give to the creature the honour that is due to the Creator. To give check to this odious practice, the Lord God repeatedly declares, that he is determined to secure to himself the glory that is due to his name. This solemn assurance ought to render us exceedingly cautious, lest in any respect we encroach on this sacred prerogative of Jehovah, who will not allow men with impunity to deprive him of his just right and claim. The prophecy we have now been considering, hath a special reference, as we have seen, to the captivity of the Jews at Babylon, which was the furnace of affliction wherein they were tried and refined. The better sort of them were separated from the profane and hypocritical that were consumed, whilst the upright were purged from their sins, and gradually sanctified through the divine blessing on their affliction and the word of God. In this manner, God purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

These words contain a beautiful exordium to another article of this discourse, directed to the chosen posterity of Jacob. Having been converted to the God of their fathers, they were much perplexed as to their predicted captivity, notwithstanding they were assured they should be delivered by Cyrus king of

* Zech. i. 15.

of Perſia. The Lord God, perfectly knowing the negligence of men in liſtening to the meſſages which he ſends to them, again demands ſerious attention to the ſubject of which he was about to ſpeak by his ſervant. Hearken unto me, (ſaith God,) O Iſrael, who art called to be my peculiar people; who art under the ſtrongeſt obligations from gratitude, intereſt, and duty, to incline your ear to my inſtructions, and to obey my voice—*I am he* that hath choſen you to be my inheritance, that hath entered into covenant with you, and hath wrought for you many glorious deliverances.—*I am the firſt* in reſpect of exiſtence, being from everlaſting God—the firſt in point of excellence, infinitely poſſeſſing every divine perfection—the firſt in authority, having ſupreme univerſal dominion—the firſt cauſe of all things who gave them being, and the author of every good and perfect gift—*I alſo am the laſt*, not only without beginning, but without end of life—the laſt in whoſe glory all the diſpenſations of providence, and the operations of grace, ſhall terminate—the laſt who ſhall exiſt through eternal ages, and endure for ever. This peculiar character is of the ſame import with the name Jehovah, which denotes the paſt and the future, and taken in connection with what is added in the next verſe, forms a magnificent deſcription of the Lord God who demands attention.

13 Mine hand alſo hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath ſpanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they ſtand up together.

To impreſs the minds of his people with a reverential awe of his infinite majeſty and glory, the God of Iſrael gives a ſhort ſublime repreſentation of his omnipotence, accommodated to the weakneſs of human apprehenſion. The eternal Jehovah, in alluſion to the work of a wiſe and mighty artificer,

declares that, being to build a ſpacious habitation for the children of men, and to erect a grand theatre on which he might exhibit his own glory, he laid the foundations thereof in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould not be removed for ever. He founded it upon the ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods *. This large globe is ſo admirably conſtructed by divine wiſdom and power, and reſts ſo firm on its baſis, that it ſhall laſt all the time, and anſwer the end for which it was made, neither altering its ſhape, nor changing its courſe.—*And my right hand hath ſpanned the heavens.* The right hand being the chief inſtrument of human action, when attributed to God, denotes the exertion of his mighty power, whereby he performs the moſt aſtoniſhing wonders, and, among others, meaſures the immenſe vault of heaven, and exactly comprehends its extent. Though the heavens preſented to human view appear to be of unlimited compaſs, far exceeding the poſſibility of meaſurement, yet this vaſt expanſe is perfectly aſcertained by the hand of omnipotence. This lofty deſcription of Jehovah ſignificantly expreſſes the infinitude of his nature, and the greatneſs of his power.—*When I call unto them, they ſtand up together.* All the celeſtial hoſts continue to this day according to his ordinance; for all are his ſervants, ever obedient to his command, and ready to execute his pleaſure. How grand, how magnificent the diſplays which the Almighty hath given of his power in the heavens and the earth, whereby a firm foundation is laid on which the faith and hope of his people may be eſtabliſhed. His omnipotence can eaſily give check to human pride and preſumption, and adminiſter ſeaſonable relief and comfort to his afflicted church.

14 All ye aſſemble yourſelves, and hear, which among them hath declared theſe *things?* The LORD hath loved him: he will do

* Pſal. xxiv. 2.

do his pleaſure on Babylon, and his arm *ſhall be on* the Chaldeans.

The Lord God of Iſrael having declared that he is the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, that all things are directed according to his pleaſure, proceeds to ſhew that by conſequence he can eaſily fulfil the promiſes he hath made to his people, however improbable they may ſeem. He invites all who are Iſraelites indeed, to attend to the evidence of his eternal power and godhead, of the truth of which the hypocritical and ſceptical did not acknowledge themſelves perſuaded. For this purpoſe he requires them to convene and conſider the following queſtion—*Who among them hath declared theſe things?* Who among the idols honoured by the nations, who among the diviners, the ſoothſayers, the aſtrologers, and prognoſticators reſpected at Babylon, hath foretold the events that I have made known to you, with their circumſtances and conſequences?—*The Lord hath loved him.* He is the object of God's diſtinguiſhing favour and regard; to him the Moſt High hath been pleaſed to reveal theſe things, and on him he hath conferred the honour of informing his people of their certain approach. According to this expoſition, which, as far as I perceive, affords a fair and juſt interpretation of the words, our Prophet is the perſon intended, of whom it may indeed be ſaid, the Lord loved him. I will not, however, contend for this application of the expreſſion, in oppoſition to the learned Vitringa, and the other commentators I have conſulted, who are of opinion that Cyrus is here meant, who is called the Lord's anointed. Of that great man it may be ſaid the Lord loved him—becauſe he choſe him to execute his righteous judgments on Babylon, which had grievouſly afflicted his people—becauſe he endowed him with excellent natural abilities, and crowned with ſucceſs all his expeditions, ſo that he appeared to be

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the object of God's gracious care and regard; and becauſe God was pleaſed to let him know that he was the author of all the ſucceſs that attended his enterprizes, which the prince confeſſed in his royal proclamation. It is alſo ſaid, that what is added ſeems to refer to that highly favoured perſon.—*He will do his pleaſure on Babylon*, &c. The deliverer of Iſrael, and the avenger of the wrongs they ſuſtained from the Chaldeans, was ſo entirely to ſubdue them, as to have them at his pleaſure and diſpoſal. He was to make them feel the weight of his powerful arm, whereby the ſtrength and glory of that renowned city and empire were to be overthrown and aboliſhed.

15 I, *even I*, have ſpoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he ſhall make his way proſperous.

The Lord God ſolemnly declares that he had explicitly foretold by his Spirit in our Prophet the remarkable circumſtances that were intimately connected with the deliverance of his people from captivity. Nor had he ſimply predicted them; he had done more: in his determined purpoſe, he had called and brought forward the illuſtrious prince who was to perform the arduous ſervice. The expreſſions here uſed repreſent the Perſian conqueror as already in exiſtence, as having received his commiſſion from the Almighty, though he was not born for a long time after the prophecy was delivered; and conſequently they intimate the infallible certainty of the predicted event.—*And he ſhall make his way proſperous*. His exertions ſhall be crowned with ſucceſs and glory; notwithſtanding the formidable oppoſition he hath to ſurmount: he ſhall vanquiſh the kingdom and city which have for long period proved adverſe to the tranquillity and happineſs of my people. Thus have we conſidered the evidence brought forward to ſhew the divinity of the God of

Iſrael,

Iſrael, the force of which hath been already pointed out.

16 Come ye near to me, hear ye this; I have not ſpoken in ſecret from the beginning: from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the LORD God and his Spirit hath ſent me.

Theſe words are intended to ſhew that the predictions relative to the above mentioned event were publiſhed long before they were fulfilled. I had almoſt been induced by the different ſentiments of interpreters of this paſſage, to enter the thorny field of controverſy, and to ſtate the arguments whereby they ſupport their ſeveral opinions reſpecting the perſon who here addreſſed the Jewiſh people. But recollecting that this ſtatement was not likely to have contributed much to promote any valuable practical purpoſes, I only obſerve that the Lord God ſeems to be the perſon who ſpeaks by his ſervant in the firſt part of the verſe, and that Iſaiah in the laſt clauſe explicitly affirms his divine miſſion.—*Come ye near to me.* This expreſſion may have reference to the practice of perſons who having ſomewhat of importance to communicate to thoſe in whom they are deeply intereſted, deſire that they would come near them, in order to hear with the greater advantage. The Almighty by our Prophet, requires his people not to keep at a diſtance from him, like thoſe who are unconcerned and indifferent as to the information he was about to impart, but to come nigh that they might receive his inſtructions with the utmoſt attention.—*Hear ye this.* Give diligent heed to the following circumſtance that well deſerves ſerious conſideration.—*I have not ſpoken in ſecret from the beginning.* From the early period in which you were formed into a nation and a church; I reſided among you by the viſible ſymbols of my preſence, and took

took you under my conduct and protection. Thence forward I conveyed inſtruction to you; not in the uncertain ambiguous manner in which the oracles received by other nations have been delivered, but with perſpicuity and evidence. The laws which I gave you, were publicly and plainly promulgated from mount Sinai; my ſervants the prophets did not ſpeak to you in obſcure corners, but delivered predictions of many future events, in places of public reſort, which were punctually fulfilled, as thouſands of your brethren can teſtify.—*From the time it was, there am I.* Theſe words probably refer to the ſubject of the foregoing prophecy; namely, the overthrow of Babylon by the Perſian monarch, and the deliverance of the Jews from captivity. From the time it was foretold, I the Lord made it known as a certain approaching event, which I was determined to bring to paſs in due ſeaſon, that I might demonſtrate my power and preſence. In this manner Jehovah excluſively appropriates to himſelf the honour of having clearly foretold a diſtant future remarkable occurrence, which gave evidence that he is the only true God.

And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath ſent me. Our Prophet explicitly affirms that he acted by divine commiſſion, that he ſpake by the higheſt authority. The Lord God having inquired Whom ſhall I ſend, and who ſhall go for us? Iſaiah replied, Here am I, ſend me. And he ſaid, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, *&c.* In virtue of this deſignation to his office, he was empowered to act as the ſervant of the Lord of hoſts, who ſent him to diſcharge his miniſtry among his countrymen the Jews. By the Holy Spirit he was not only appointed to this ſacred office, but he was inſtructed, ſanctified, and well qualified by his gifts and graces for performing the various parts of his function with honour and fidelity. The prophet Zechariah ſpeaks of his miſſion in ſimilar terms, 'Thou ſhalt know (ſaid he) that the Lord of hoſts

'hath

'hath ſent me unto you *.' Indeed all the prophets of the Lord in foretelling things to come, ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, who by means of impreſſions made upon their minds, or revelations conveyed through the medium of their ſenſes, directed them what to commit to writing for the benefit of mankind.—Aſſured then of the divine miſſion of the eminent ſervant of God, whoſe prophecies we are conſidering; let us view him as the meſſenger of Jehovah, and receive his predictions as the words of the living God, which came not by the will of man, but were given by divine inſpiration.

17 Thus ſaith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Iſrael; I *am* the LORD thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou ſhouldeſt go.

This ſolemn introduction to what follows in the two ſubſequent verſes, repreſents the ſupreme excellence of the glorious perſon who addreſſes his people; his intimate connection with them, and the powerful obligations he hath brought them under to his obedience—*Thus ſaith the Lord*, the Moſt High over all the earth, whoſe name alone is Jehovah. It is not man, but God who here ſpeaketh, and therefore we ought to hearken with veneration and awe to the words of his mouth.—Thy Redeemer who with a ſtrong hand and ſtretched out arm, reſcued thy fathers from hard bondage in Egypt; who often delivered them from the hands of their enemies; who according to my promiſes will liberate you from captivity at Babylon: And who redeems thoſe who are Iſraelites indeed from ſpiritual ſervitude, brings them into glorious liberty, and conducts them to the land of uprightneſs.—*The Holy One of Iſrael*, all whoſe works, and words, and

* Chap. ii. 11.

and ways, are perfectly free from the leaſt taint of impurity; from whom proceeds all the ſanctity of my people, and who am honoured by their worſhip and ſervice.—*I am the Lord thy God* who entered into covenant with thee, who will employ my perfections for your benefit; my providence ſhall make all things work together for your good, and my promiſes ſhall be faithfully performed for your comfort.

Who teacheth thee to profit. There is none that teacheth like God, with ſuch amiable condeſcenſion, with ſuch perſpicuity and evidence, with ſuch aſſiduity and patience, with ſuch authority and efficacy. He conveys inſtruction by means of his providence, his law, and his goſpel; by his ſervants, and his ordinances. And thro' the powerful agency of his Holy Spirit, he cauſes to profit by the important leſſons which he inculcates. He opens the underſtanding to perceive the meaning and deſign of the ſalutary inſtructions he conveys, and effectually diſpoſes to hearken to his voice, and to obey his precepts. He writes his laws upon the heart; he puts his Spirit into his people, and cauſes them to walk in his ſtatutes and judgments, and do them*. In this manner God teacheth to profit. Under the Old Teſtament, he gave his people many inſtructive leſſons by his providential diſpenſations; by his inſtitutions and prophets, and by his good Spirit, as good Nehemiah gratefully acknowledged †. Under the goſpel he confers this precious benefit on his church in a more eminent degree, according as it is written in the prophets, 'they ſhall be all taught of God ‡.' As every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father the way of reconciliation, life, and holineſs, cometh to Jeſus Chriſt, truſting to his righteouſneſs, grace, and Spirit; let us with humility and faith

* Ezek. xxxvi. 27. † Chap. ix. 13, 14. and 22.
‡ See John vi. 45.

faith have recourſe to him who hath ſaid, 'Him that 'cometh unto me I will in no wiſe caſt out.'

Who leadeth thee by the way that thou ſhouldeſt go. What the cloud was to the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs; what the guide is to the wandering traveller; what the leader and commander is to the army; that, and infinitely more, is the Lord God to his people. The expreſſion before us, may allude to the practice of parents and thoſe that have the care of children, who obſerving their incapacity to conduct themſelves, take them by the hand, and lead them in the way that they ſhould take. Such compaſſionate regard doth God ſhew to his people. Well knowing their frame and frailty, and how prone they are to go aſtray; he not only upholds them by his power, but conducts them by his counſel in the paths of righteouſneſs for his name's ſake. He carries them forward in the way that they ſhould go, in the way of his commandments; bringing their hearts and lives into entire ſubjection to his will. He diſpoſes them cordially to approve of his laws and diſpenſations, and chearfully to proceed in the path of duty; ſolicitous that nothing may juſtle them out of the right road, and give them occaſion to ſtumble.—Let us diligently follow our gracious Lord and leader; ſtudious whether in public or private continually to ſet him before us, and to comply with his directions.

18 O that thou hadſt hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea:

Since God is the faithful inſtructor and leader of his people in all ages, whence doth it happen that the poſterity of Iſrael were reduced for a long ſeaſon to ſuch a calamitous condition, having been vanquiſhed, plundered, and led captive by their

enemies? The verſe now to be conſidered gives a ſatisfying reply to this queſtion, and ſhews that God is not in the leaſt to be blamed; that the fault was entirely their own, and aroſe from their diſobedience to his ſtatutes and ordinances.—*O that thou hadſt hearkened to my commandments*, which bear the ſtamp of my ſupreme authority, which make known my good and perfect will concerning you, and at the ſame time exhibit the riches of my mercy, the importance and excellence of my ſalvation. Doth not my precepts which are holy, juſt, and good, deſigned to enlighten the mind, to reform the heart, and to regulate the converſation and conduct; demand from you diligent attention, unſuſpecting confidence, and chearful obedience? After the Lord God had promulgated his law from mount Sinai, he thus expreſſed his ardent deſire for the people to whom it was delivered, 'O that 'there were ſuch an heart in them that they would 'fear me, and keep all my commandments always, 'that it might be well with the mand with their chil-'dren for ever *.' And again he expreſſes himſelf in ſimilar terms, 'O that my people had hearken-'ed unto me, and Iſrael had walked in my ways †!" Such are the tender mercies of Jehovah, that he not only grants to his people the means of happineſs, but he repreſents himſelf as regreting with paternal affection their frowardneſs and obſtinacy, which fruſtrate the benevolent intentions of his love. He ſeems as if diſappointed when we perverſely neglect to improve the advantages he confers, for obtaining the bleſſings he hath promiſed, and the felicity he is ready to impart in the way conſiſtent with his own honour; the dignity of his government, and the nature of that felicity to which he would exalt us.

Then had thy peace been as a river. Diſtreſſing calamities would have been prevented, and the moſt deſirable tranquillity would have been enjoyed.

* Deut. v. 29. † Pſalm lxxxi. 13.

ed. Were the commandments of God obeyed as they ought, there would not be any thing to diſturb or injure mens felicity; the church would afford a pleaſant repreſentation of the exalted ſtate they ſhall attain in the celeſtial regions.—Peace may here denote, as in ſome other paſſages of ſcripture, not only freedom from diſtreſs and calamity, but all manner of proſperity, both internal and external. Great peace have they that love God's law, and nothing ſhall offend them. The meaning of the words before us ſeems to be this: Hadſt thou hearkened to my commandments, thou ſhouldeſt have rejoiced in abundance of the bleſſings of providence and grace, conducive to thy eſtabliſhment and comfort. The ſimilitude here uſed plainly intimates, that one benefit ſhould without interruption have followed another in quick ſucceſſion—that the happineſs ariſing from obedience to the divine authority, ſhould not have proved like a ſtream that ſometimes runs dry; but would have been exceeding abundant, reſembling the large quantity of waters which are continually flowing in a great river—that it ſhould have been perpetual, and never have failed like the waters of a river that inceſſantly receive new ſupplies from the ſources whence they take their riſe. In like manner the obedient people of God ſhould have had their felicity not only enlarged, but extended throughout all ages by plentiful communications of every bleſſing, from the inexhauſtible fountain of life and conſolation. The tranquillity of worldly men which depends on the greateſt uncertainties, and their own fluctuating humours, is ſcanty and precarious, and oft-times of ſhort duration; whereas the peace reſulting from obedience to the will of God, is abundant, extenſive, and permanent. A powerful argument this to hearken to God's commandments, eſpecially taken in connection with the words immediately added.

And thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea.

The

The righteouſneſs here intended, may include all the temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings, which give evidence that a perſon or people are truly righteous; that they enjoy the fruits of that righteouſneſs which is of God by faith in the great Meſſiah; the favour of God and communion with him. The generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed. It muſt be ſo, for God is in the generation of the righteous who receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of ſalvation. The righteouſneſs which conſiſts in giving to God the things that are God's, and unto men the things that are mens; gives ſatisfying proof of love to God and his ways, and is well pleaſing unto the Lord, who loveth them that follow after righteouſneſs. This comprehenſive benefit is promiſed to reſemble the waves of the ſea, which rapidly follow one another, continually moving forward, and ſurmounting each other, whilſt they roll along with ſuch prodigious force as can with difficulty be oppoſed. The compariſon ſtrongly intimates, that by hearkening to the commandments of God, large advances are made in the practice of holineſs; new ſtrength is acquired ſufficient to bear down all oppoſition that lies in the way; and thus the people of God are carried forward with increaſing celerity toward the great object to which they bend their courſe. By theſe two elegant ſimilitudes, our Prophet adorns and illuſtrates his ſubject, and by this varied imagery promotes at once entertainment and inſtruction. In this pleaſing manner he powerfully recommends obedience to God, and delineates the peculiar advantages attending his ſervice.—Theſe motives which have been verified in the experience of thouſands, ought to ſtimulate us to pay that ſacred regard to the authority of Jehovah which he juſtly demands. The man that feareth the Lord and walketh in his way, never fails to be bleſſed. How pleaſant was the teſtimony of an eminently good man to the truth we have been conſidering.

Being

Being wiſhed a good day by his friend—replied that he never had an ill one in his life. Being aſked how that happened—anſwered that every morning he endeavoured to have his will conformed to the will of God, determined that whatſoever pleaſed God, ſhould pleaſe him; ſo every day was a good day to him, and like a wave of the ſea wafted him on his way.

19 Thy ſeed alſo had been as the ſand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name ſhould not have been cut off, nor deſtroyed from before me.

Another happy conſequence that ſhould have reſulted from obedience to God is deſcribed by two expreſſions of ſimilar import. In the promiſe that God made to Abraham, he engaged that 'his ſeed 'ſhould be as the ſtars of heaven, and as the ſand 'upon the ſea ſhore for multitude *.' This aſſurance was afterward renewed to Jacob, to whom he ſaid, 'I will make thy ſeed as the ſand of the ſea, 'which cannot be numbered for multitude †.' Theſe promiſes were actually verified in the reign of Solomon ‡; and had the poſterity of Iſrael been ſo wiſe as to have hearkened to the commands, the admonitions, and inſtructions of Jehovah, they might have continued to multiply throughout all generations. But, alas, when God ſpake to them they would not hearken; and therefore he cut them ſhort until they were ſo diminiſhed, that the whole nation was not equal in number to one of their tribes in the time they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God.—*His*, (or, as ſome copies read) *thy name ſhould not have been cut off*, &c. Had the poſterity of Iſrael been obedient to the will of God, he would not have allowed the better part of them to have been cut off by war, famine, and peſtilence; but they ſhould

* Gen. xxii. 17. † Chap. xxxii. 12. ‡ See 1 Kings iv. 29

ſhould have been the objects of his peculiar care and protection. Their name, their reputation, and poſterity ſhould have been increaſed and perpetuated. The name, the reſemblance, and oft times the inheritance of the fathers ſhould have been tranſmitted to the children, ſo that they might have been had in everlaſting remembrance. To their diſobedience to God, then, muſt be attributed their forfeiture of the fruits of his favour, and the interpoſitions of his providence, and conſequently the deſtruction of their renown and glory.—What precious bleſſings do men deprive themſelves of by their tranſgreſſions of the commandments of God! The Iſraelites were the peculiar people of Jehovah, his redeemed and ſanctified ones, and bleſſed by him above all the kingdoms of the earth. They were honoured with magnificent titles, they were favoured with his ordinances, his temple, his ſervants, his oracles, and preſence; and yet when they hearkened not to his commandments, righteouſneſs, peace, and honour departed from them; the ſword and famine, peſtilence and captivity, cut them off. From hence let us learn diligently to obſerve all God's ſtatutes which he hath commanded us for our good *. Thou haſt commanded us to keep thy precepts; O that our ways were directed to keep thy ſtatutes! then ſhall we experience more ſubſtantial comfort than in the pleaſures of ſin and the poſſeſſions of this world.

20 Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of ſinging declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; ſay ye, The LORD hath redeemed his ſervant Jacob.

The Jewiſh people are directed to take the benefit of the proclamation to be iſſued by Cyrus king of

* Deut. x. 13.

of Perſia, and to depart from the city and empire of Babylon with joy and triumph, publiſhing every where this important benefit. The God of Iſrael, for various uſeful purpoſes, would have his church reſtored to the land of Judea, to which place he gave them expreſs order to return. Some of them, who had ſettled in the land of Chaldea, and acquired poſſeſſions in that country, might have been averſe to leave it; and others, driven to the remote corners of the land, might not have been diſpoſed to undertake ſo long and hazardous a journey. They are therefore required by divine authority, to leave the kingdom wherein they had been long detained, not in a ſecret clandeſtine manner, but—*With a voice of ſinging declare ye.* They were to make known their liberation among all the nations into which they were to come, and to extol their deliverance with ſhouting and the voice of triumph—to declare the cauſe, the magnitude, and the utility of this wonderful interpoſition of divine providence.—*Tell this, utter it to the end of the earth*, &c. Far from concealing this inſtance of the favour and care of Jehovah, they were enjoined to publiſh it in the moſt diſtant lands, and to tell that the divine diſpleaſure on account of their atrocious crimes being appeaſed, they were releaſed from captivity, and ordered to return to their own country. The prophet Jeremiah hath deſcribed the reſtoration of Iſrael from Aſſyria to their own land in ſimilar language *.

Say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his ſervant Jacob, not only from bondage in Egypt, but from captivity at Babylon, where they were detained for ſeventy years, in conſequence of their enormous tranſgreſſions. Now the Lord hath viſited them, reſtored them to liberty, and the poſſeſſion of the land which he gave unto their fathers. Whilſt, therefore, the heathen nations were aſtoniſhed at this deliverance, and obliged to acknowledge the Lord

* Chap. xxxi. 7—10.

Lord hath done great things for them; well did it become this redeemed people to declare unto the ends of the earth, with rejoicing and tranſports of gratitude, Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

21 And they thirſted not *when* he led them through the deſarts; he cauſed the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock alſo, and the waters guſhed out.

The Lord God graciouſly aſſures his people that he would make ample proviſion for their ſafety and comfort in their journey from Babylon to Judea. The divine care and protection of which they were aſſured, is illuſtrated in the moſt elegant manner, by alluſion to the miraculous exit of their fathers from the land of Egypt, and the kind interpoſitions of providence in their behalf, when travelling through the howling wilderneſs. The parabolic ſtile employed to decorate and amplify the ſubject, and to render more ſplendid the divine compaſſion and peculiar care of Jehovah, was not deſigned, as I ſuppoſe, to be literally underſtood. Explicit aſſurance is certainly given, that during their long journey through the deſarts, the Almighty would provide every thing neceſſary for the ſafe return of his people to their own inheritance. This ſignal favour and wonderful diſplay of his kindneſs, God directs them to publiſh to the moſt remote nations of the world.—This prediction, which was fulfilled to Ezra and about 50,000 people that accompanied him from Babylon into the land of Iſrael, is in its ſpiritual and more ſublime ſenſe verified to thoſe, who take the benefit of the proclamation of ſpiritual liberty, made by the great Meſſiah to the captives of ſin and Satan. Every part of the prophecy agreeth not more exactly to the return from Babylon, than it doth to that eternal redemption thereby prefigured, which ſeems to be the grand ſubject to which

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it ultimately refers.—To this ſubject let us apply the prediction, agreeable to the principle adopted by the moſt celebrated interpreters of the ſcriptures. It muſt be acknowledged, ſaith the late learned biſhop of Briſtol, in his Diſſertations on the Prophecies *. 'That many prophecies of ſcripture have a double 'meaning, literal and myſtical, reſpecting two e-'vents, and receive a twofold completion.' He adds that Dr Warburton, who improves every ſubject that he handles, ſays, 'that the prophe-'tical writings are full of this kind of metaphor.'—To people of the above deſcription the exhortation is directed, *Go ye forth*, &c. Abandon the idolatrous practices to which the inhabitants of myſtical Babylon are addicted, and renounce all farther intercourſe with them. Let thoſe who participate in the redemption of the Son of God, publiſh with exultation and the voice of thankſgiving the ſalvation that God hath wrought for his people. Let them alſo declare the copious ſupplies which he hath provided for their comfortable ſubſiſtence during their paſſage through the wilderneſs of this world.—Thoſe who firſt preached the goſpel liberally enjoyed the accompliſhment of what is here foretold: when travelling through the deſerts of the Gentile nations, they were refreſhed by the waters of conſolation that flowed from Jeſus Chriſt, the ſpiritual rock which was ſmitten for the benefit of the church. And to this day the people of God are thereby ſolaced and comforted; and this aſtoniſhing inſtance of the loving kindneſs of the Lord, they ought to publiſh to the end of the earth, that men may be induced to celebrate the praiſes of his glorious name, with which heaven and earth ought ever to reſound.

22 *There* is no peace, ſaith the LORD, to the wicked.

Our Prophet concludes this diſcourſe with theſe memorable

* Vol. 1. page 76 of the 10th edition.

memorable words, which are worthy of ſerious attention. The wicked, of whom he ſpeaks, are emphatically deſcribed by the name here given them, which, in the Hebrew language, is derived from a word that ſignifies to be unquiet—to be guilty—and to be condemned. They are agitated by contending turbulent paſſions, and frequent diſappointments, whereby uneaſy commotions are excited in their breaſts, diſcord and ſtrife are introduced into ſociety. They are conſequently guilty of the moſt flagrant tranſgreſſions of the beautiful order which God hath eſtabliſhed, and are charged in ſcripture with the odious crimes of contemning him, and of riſing up in rebellion againſt his authority. They are therefore juſtly condemned; the righteous Lord who hateth wickedneſs, and is known by the judgment that he executeth, hath declared, 'that 'the wicked ſhall be turned into hell with all the 'nations that forget God. Upon the wicked he ſhall 'rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and a horrible tem-'peſt, this ſhall be the portion of their cup.' Such is the miſerable character of the wicked who ſometimes poſſeſs great natural abilities, and occaſionally aſſume plauſible appearances of piety. Let us then impartially conſider, if this deſcription is applicable to us, leſt we ſay, Peace, peace, to ourſelves, whilſt God ſaith,

There is no peace. To people of the above deſcription, there is no reconciliation and friendſhip with God, which alleviates every affliction and ſorrow, and ſweetens every bleſſing. The wicked deſpiſeth the Lord, and his ſoul hateth him that loveth violence. Whilſt this contrariety of diſpoſition, intereſt, and deſign ſubſiſts, it is impoſſible that they can enjoy peace with God. Nor can they poſſeſs agreeable tranquillity of mind whilſt they continue at variance with God. Diſturbed by tumultuous paſſions, diſtracted by the accuſations of their guilty conſciences, and diſtreſſed by perplexing fears and anxious cares; they are ſtrang-

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ers to the inward compoſure and ſerenity enjoyed by the righteous. Neither have they peace among themſelves. Servants of divers luſts and pleaſures, acting under the influence of oppoſite principles and deſigns, inconſiſtent with the eaſe, the intereſt, and ſafety of others, they kindle the flames of contention and diſcord all around them. And whilſt they continue wicked, they have not the leaſt proſpect of entering into the peaceful regions of the bleſſed, but continuing at variance with the God of peace, and with their own conſciences, and in perpetual enmity with each other, they ſhall experience the truth here affirmed by the Lord God omnipotent, who is faithful and true—*There is no peace to the wicked.* Conſider this, ye that forget God, lay this momentous truth to heart, ye that are wicked, who live in the habitual practice of groſs ſins, and in the deliberate omiſſion of known duties. Plead not your incapacity to comply with this reaſonable requeſt, whilſt you are always prepared to extenuate your negligence by the moſt plauſible pretexts. Urge not the fooliſh pretence of want of time, whilſt you have enough of this precious article to ſquander away in ſin and vanity. Do not abſurdly alledge, that it is too ſoon for you to renounce your tranſgreſſions, and to return to the Lord. Is it poſſible, that you can too early eſcape miſery and wo, and become good and happy? If it is now too ſoon ſeriouſly to review your ſpiritual ſtate, and to be reconciled to God, ere long you may find it too late; which, may God of his infinite mercy prevent, for Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

WE proceed, in dependance upon God, to conſider the fifth book of the Prophecies delivered by this eminent ſervant of Jehovah, Iſaiah the ſon of Amoz. From the 40th chapter incluſive, the chief ſubject of his predictions hath been the deliverance of the Jews from captivity at Babylon; with ſtrong intimations of a far more glorious deliverance which that liberation was intended to exhibit, whereby idolatry was to be overthrown; the exiſtence and perfections of the God of Iſrael were to be demonſtrated. Henceforward the ſalvation of the Gentiles from ignorance, ſervitude, and guilt, by an illuſtrious perſon called the Iſrael, and ſervant of Johovah, is the topic of theſe prophecies. Our Prophet's views are almoſt wholly confined to this ſublime ſubject, ſo that Babylon, which had hitherto been often introduced, is now dropped, and hardly ever comes in ſight again. In treating with great elegance of this grand event, he employs the moſt beautiful figures to repreſent its magnificence, and to embelliſh the important circumſtances with which it was to be accompanied. He deſcribes the wonderful perſon of the Meſſiah, the character he ſuſtains, the œconomy over which he preſides, the conditions through which he was to paſs, the kingdom he was to eſtabliſh among the Gentiles, which was to terminate in the higheſt ſplendor and glory, with its various fortunes, and the ſtate of the Jewiſh church.—In the chapter before us, a new and very pleaſing ſcene is opened to view. The Holy Spirit, grieved and vexed by the obſtinate wickedneſs of great part of the Jewiſh nation, who had rejected his admonitions and counſels, directs our Prophet to foretel the future vocation of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, with its cauſes, means, and effects. For this purpoſe, after a ſhort exordium,

exordium, the Son of God, manifeſt in the fleſh, is brought forward in perſon, declaring the full extent of his commiſſion, for executing the great and glorious work of the converſion of the heathen nations to the true and living God, after moſt part of the poſterity of Iſrael rejected the ſalvation offered to them, ver. 1—6.—Jehovah is then repreſented giving the moſt ample promiſes to the compaſſionate Redeemer, of the vaſt ſucceſs with which the call of the Gentiles was to be attended; and exhibiting the flouriſhing ſtate of the church under the peculiar care of divine providence and grace, which is followed with the joyful gratulations of the ſaints, ver. 7—13.—After which, the church compoſed of the elect Jews that had been exerciſed with various afflictions through many ages, are aſſured of the wiſhed-for proſperity and ſucceſs of the kingdom of the Moſt High, and the fulfilment of the promiſes and predictions delivered on that ſubject, ver. 14—21.—The chapter concludes with a prediction, that immenſe numbers of people were to flock into the church, of which kings and princes ſhould become the kind guardians—whilſt their adverſaries were to be deſtroyed by the terrible ſlaughter which they were to make of one another, ver. 22—26.

CHAP. XLIX.

LISTEN, O iſles, unto me; and hearken, ye people from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

Jeſus Chriſt the great prophet of the Lord, the true Meſſiah, the Saviour of the world, calls the attention

tention of the inhabitants of the iſlands and diſtant countries, to the conſummate abilities and ample qualifications he poſſeſſes for being the Redeemer of the church.—If you aſk of whom ſpeaketh the prophet, of himſelf or of ſome other man? The ſervant of Jehovah, the light of the Gentiles, the ſalvation of God to the ends of the earth, the inſtructor of the iſlands and of remote heathen kingdoms, are characters which do not properly apply to Iſaiah, or any other beſide Jeſus Chriſt; who ſaith, 'Look unto me and be ye ſaved all the ends of 'the earth; for I am God, and there is none elſe.' Every one well affected to the goſpel, who knows and loves the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and impartially conſiders this prophecy, muſt acknowledge, that he is the illuſtrious perſon who ſpeaks by his Spirit in our Prophet. Having expended for nought much time and labour on the tribes of Iſrael, that he might bring them into the way of ſalvation; lo! he turns to the Gentiles, and generouſly offers them that precious benefit which the Jews deſpiſed, and the privileges therewith connected. He addreſſes his diſcourſe to the inhabitants of the iſlands of the Mediterranean Sea, where he foreknew his kingdom was to be eſtabliſhed, and his goſpel made known—And 'to the people from far,' who reſide in lands ſituated at the greateſt diſtance from Judea, among which may be comprehended the inhabitants of Great Britain. Theſe nations, the Son of God requires to hearken to the important information he was about to convey to them, which ought to be received with reſpect and attention, and ſeriouſly conſidered as the means of begetting that faith which comes by hearing. You have hitherto heard philoſophers, orators, diviners, and ſoothſayers, by many of whom you were impoſed upon and led away from true wiſdom and the way of ſalvation. I therefore now offer you, ſaith the Lord, a teacher, to whom, if you hearken diligently, and obey as you ought, you ſhall come to the knowledge

knowledge of the truth which you have ſought in vain, and ſhare in that ſalvation which you have deſired without effect.

The Lord hath called me, &c. The diſcourſe commences with informing the Gentile nations, of his character and office, by whom they were to be inſtructed—That he is the ambaſſador of God to men, who is appointed to teach them the knowledge of that ſalvation which he himſelf was to procure and beſtow—that he was deſtined to this great work, not only from the womb when he appeared on earth in the faſhion of a man, but before the foundations of the world were laid. From everlaſting, before his works of old, the Lord God choſe and appointed the perſon who here ſpeaks to the arduous work afterward mentioned.—*From the bowels of my mother*, &c. Prior to his nativity, Jehovah particularly deſcribed his perſon, qualifications, offices, and various circumſtances, relative to his humbled and exalted ſtate. And a conſiderable time before he was born, he was named by the angel who appeared to his mother, and ſaid, 'thou 'ſhalt bring forth a Son, and ſhalt call his name Je-'ſus. He ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the 'Son of the Higheſt; and the Lord God ſhall give 'unto him the throne of his father David *.' By this ſolemn introduction to the following diſcourſe, this illuſtrious perſonage acquaints his hearers with the dignity of his character; that he might thereby conciliate the greater attention and reſpect to the important truths he was about to deliver.—'To 'theſe things then let us give the more earneſt 'heed, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip—'For how ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſal-'vation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by 'the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them 'that heard him †.'

2 And he hath made my mouth like a ſharp

* Luke i. 31, 32. † Heb. ii. 1, *& ſeq.*

a ſharp ſword; in the ſhadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a poliſhed ſhaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.

The Son of God, the great Prophet of the Lord, declares, that Jehovah had perfectly qualified him for performing the prophetic office, to the exerciſe of which he was called and conſtituted.—In the firſt expreſſion, the cauſe is put for the effect, the mouth for the words that proceed from it. The diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt are intended, the inſtructions, the reproofs, exhortations, and threatenings which proceeded from his lips, into which grace was poured, who ſpake as never man ſpake, ſo that his enemies could not reſiſt the Spirit and wiſdom that he manifeſted. His words were like a ſharp ſword, that powerfully penetrates the heart, that divides aſunder the fleſh and ſpirit, and deſtroys the animal life. In like manner, the words of the Son of God, accompanied with divine power, not only ſeparate man from man, him that believeth from him that believeth not, the righteous from the wicked; but they reach the conſciences of men, they kill the body of ſin and death, they ſubdue carnal affections, and bring down every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge of him. Thus they give him complete victory over his enemies, who are ſlain by the words of his mouth, and in whoſe converſion or overthrow he glorioufly triumphs. This efficacy is attributed to Jehovah, who appointed him his ſervant, and endowed him with ſuch immenſe powers of eloquence, that every mouth might be ſtopt, and every tongue that riſeth againſt him in judgment he might condemn. And his word in the mouth of his ſervants who are ſent forth by him to ſubdue the nations into the obedience of faith, attended with his divine agency, prove the power of God unto ſalvation.

In the ſhadow of his hand hath he hid me. The hand of Jehovah may denote his power and providence,

dence whereby his divine purpoſes are executed and brought into effect. The ſhadow of his hand which exhibited the exact form by which his mighty operations are modelled, may ſignify the decrees, predictions, and promiſes, with the rites and ſacrifices that afforded a juſt repreſentation of what was to be done, and executed in the fulneſs of time. In this ſhadow, Jeſus Chriſt was in great meaſure concealed from the view of the ancient church, to whom he was not made manifeſt. The apoſtle of the Gentiles, treating of the doctrine of his goſpel who was deſtined to be the ſalvation of God, uſes a ſimilar expreſſion to that now before us. He ſays, 'That the preaching of Jeſus Chriſt according to 'the revelation of the myſtery which was kept ſe-'cret ſince the world began, is now made manifeſt 'by the ſcriptures of the prophets *.' The words then may import, either that he was not revealed and clearly made known, until the remarkable period wherein he was to make his perſonal appearance; or that after he came forth from the Father's boſom, he was aſſuredly to enjoy the protection of the Almighty, as it is written in the book of Pſalms †. Of this ſafety he ſpeaks, as if he already had enjoyed it, to intimate the infallible certainty of the event, and his firm confidence, that it would be afforded him.

And made me a poliſhed ſhaft, &c. The Light of the Gentiles and the Saviour of Iſrael, deſcribes his character and office with reference to the deadly inſtruments which prove fatal to mankind. The beauty and propriety of this alluſion cannot fail to make impreſſion on the minds of his diſciples. He ſpeaks of himſelf as a poliſhed or choice ſhaft, in itſelf beautiful and admirably adapted to execute the purpoſes to which it is applied. No ſuch excellent Teacher, Saviour, or King, as Jeſus Chriſt, who in every reſpect is perfectly fitted for execu-

* Rom. xvi. 25, 26. † See Pſal. lxxxix. 21. & xci. throughout.

ting the purpoſes of infinite wiſdom and grace. He ſlays that he may ſave men; and teaches them that they muſt die unto ſin, that they may live unto righteouſneſs; that it behoves them to mortify the deeds of the body that they may live. And his word directed by his ſkilful omnipotent arm, accompanied with the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, is emphatically compared to arrows and weapons, anciently uſed in war by the eaſtern nations. It penetrates the heart, deſtroys the body of ſin and death, and deprives it of force and activity; it brings men into ſubjection to Jeſus Chriſt, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, that he may eſtabliſh the ſpiritual kingdom of God among Jews and Gentiles. —*In his quiver hath he hid me.* The quiver is a caſe for holding arrows; and in its figurative ſenſe, may denote the counſel of God, wherein thoſe illuſtrious perſons are deſcribed that were honoured to effect the converſion of men to the living God; ſuch as the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt. All theſe excellent arrows ſent forth from time to time, to perform the ſervices aſſigned them, were all contained in the divine decree. Among theſe there was one choice incomparable arrow, appropriated by the peculiar care and wiſdom of God, to ſubdue the Gentile world, and to eſtabliſh among men the kingdom of the Moſt High. This was no other than Jeſus Chriſt, who was exhibited to the Jews after the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and to the Gentiles after the fourth year of Claudius Cæſar the Roman Emperor.

3 And ſaid unto me, Thou *art* my ſervant, O Iſrael, in whom I will be glorified.

Theſe words announce the mediatorial office in which the Meſſiah was to be inveſted, and the important deſign which was thereby to be accompliſhed. Jehovah made known to him his determined purpoſe, that he ſhould not only be the Inſtructor of the

the Church, but alſo the great Mediator of the human race. For this end he was to ſubmit to a ſtate of poverty and ſervitude, and become obedient to death, even the death of the croſs; that by ſuſtaining the moſt grievous ſufferings, his people might obtain eternal ſalvation.—*O Iſrael.* Thou who of all thoſe that are Iſraelites indeed, exhibits to higheſt advantage, the diſtinguiſhing characters of Jacob, thy renowned progenitor according to the fleſh, who wreſtled with God, obtained the bleſſing, and ſaved both himſelf and his houſe.—*In whom I ſhall be glorified.* The offices executed by Jeſus Chriſt, the diſpenſation of grace over which he preſides, and the government of the church, richly diſplay the glory of God, and manifeſt the divine perfections of goodneſs, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and power of Jehovah; on account of which he is highly celebrated. This is that great work wherein all the ways of God are concentered; wherein all the great lines of revelation meet, and in which all his glorious attributes ſhine forth with the brighteſt effulgence; by which the Meſſiah is himſelf glorified, the foundations of the kingdom of God are laid, and on account whereof the praiſes of Jehovah are ſung by ten thouſand times ten thouſand through immortal ages. The obedience and death of Chriſt, whereby God is glorified, is that grand event which the Lord God contemplated with pleaſure from everlaſting, and which ſhall be admired with exquiſite delight by all the redeemed from among men. 'Ye that fear the Lord, praiſe him; all ye the ſeed 'Jacob glorify him; and fear him all ye the ſeed 'of Iſrael *.'

4 Then I ſaid, I have laboured in vain, I have ſpent my ſtrength for nought and in vain; *yet* ſurely my judgment *is* with the LORD, and my work with my God.

The Meſſiah is introduced complaining of the little

* Pſalm xxii. 23.

little ſucceſs that attended his labour among the Jews, and encouraging himſelf with the hope of greater ſucceſs and reward, promiſed to him by Jehovah. With reſpect to the former of theſe ſubjects. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt did indeed labour hard, and ſpent his ſtrength in performing the arduous work that was given him to do, as is abundantly evident from the hiſtory of his life. He magnified the law of God by his perfect obedience; he deſtroyed the empire of ſin; he vanquiſhed the powers of darkneſs; he overcame death and ſpoiled him of his conqueſts; he inceſſantly went about doing good to men. He taught in the ſynagogues, in the temple, and other places of public reſort; he refuted the cavils, and eluded the ſnares of his adverſaries; and healed the diſeaſed that were brought to him for cure. He attended at the reading of the law, and at the ſolemn feſtivals of divine inſtitution; he made long journies on foot in the diſcharge of his miniſtry, omitting no proper opportunity of conveying inſtruction to the people. During the day he was aſſiduouſly employed in teaching the way of God in truth, and privately inſtructing his diſciples; during the night he often retired and ſpent great part of it in prayer and converſe with God. In this arduous labour wherein his mind was intenſely engaged, and in which he had to ſurmount the greateſt difficulties and the moſt virulent oppoſition; this ſervant of Jehovah exhauſted his ſtrength and laboured more abundantly than the prophets, the miniſters, and the apoſtles, that were labourers together with him. They of their penury caſt into the treaſury of the church what he was pleaſed to give; he from his unſearchable riches contributed immenſe ſtores. All his perfections as God, all his abilities as man, all his qualifications as mediator, were employed for the benefit of his people.—All this labour he complains was,

For nought and in vain. The fruit and ſucceſs accompanying his immenſe labour, were not adequate

quate to the toil and fatigue he ſuſtained. The expreſſion like many others uſed in ſcripture, muſt not be abſolutely but comparatively underſtood; for our Lord had not a few diſciples in Gallilee and in Judea. It ſtrongly intimates that his work was not attended with thoſe extenſive good effects, that were ſuited to the dignity of his perſon, to what he had reaſon to expect from the pains he took to convert the Jews, to the miracles he performed, and the benefits he conferred upon the nation. Having demonſtrated by the moſt convincing proofs, that he was the promiſed long expected Meſſiah, who was able and ready to confer the great ſalvation which prophets and righteous men deſired to ſee; he ſhould have got the moſt welcome reception, and been entertained with joyful acclamations. The reverſe however was the fact; he was a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence to both the houſes of Iſrael. As a public teacher he was heard with admiration; his miracles were viewed with aſtoniſhment; notwithſtanding great part of the people blinded by ignorance and prejudices perſiſted in unbelief; ſo that comparatively ſpeaking and to external appearance, the glory of Iſrael ſeemed to have ſpent his ſtrength for nought, and to have loſt during his public miniſtry the reward of his labour.—And, alas! ſtill there is ground to renew the complaint among us in theſe laſt days, that the compaſſionate Redeemer has but ſmall retribution made to him for the toils and ſufferings he endured.—*Yet ſurely my judgment*, &c. Notwithſtanding the wiſhed for happy conſequences of the Meſſiah's Miſſion and miniſtry did not appear among the Jews; he expreſſes his firm confidence that his labours and ſufferings were to be accompanied with a certain and glorious reward. He himſelf was to be highly exalted, and a name given him that is above every name; all power in heaven and on earth was to be committed into his hands, that he might give eternal life to all who believe and obey him.

By

By his knowledge many were to be juſtified; thro' his mediation multitudes which no man can number were to be eternally ſaved. According to prophecy all kings were to fall down before him, and all nations were to ſerve him; men were to be bleſſed in him, and to call him bleſſed *. And as for his obſtinate incorrigible enemies, righteous vengeance ſhall aſſuredly be executed upon them; 'for the kingdoms that will not ſerve him ſhall periſh; yea, they ſhall be utterly waſted.' This glorious proſpect animated and ſupported him under the neglect and contempt offered to him and his ſalvation.—Similar comfortable aſſurance given to the faithful ſervants of God, that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, ought to impart conſolation to their minds, under the diſcouragements they meet with, and the little ſucceſs that attends their exertions in the ſervice of the Moſt High.

5 ¶ And now, ſaith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his ſervant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Iſrael be not gathered, yet ſhall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God ſhall be my ſtrength.

The Meſſiah declares his firm perſuaſion of obtaining the ample recompenſe of his miniſtry, founded on his having been appointed by Jehovah to the ſervice in which he was engaged.—*And now.* Whereas the unbelief and impenitence of the Jewiſh nation, to which I was primarily ſent, is remarkably conſpicuous, ſo that from them I receive not a ſuitable reward of my labours—*The Lord ſaith*, &c. who formed me the moſt excellent of all the ſons of men, and endowed me with the beſt gifts and the moſt amiable graces of which human nature

* Pſal. lxxii. 11, 17.

nature is capable; that I might execute with honour and ſucceſs the extraordinary work aſſigned to me by the divine counſel and providence.—*To be his ſervant*, that I may obey his command, accompliſh his benevolent deſign, and communicate to men the bleſſings of his grace.—*To bring Jacob again to him.* This great ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls, who ſuffered the juſt for the unjuſt, was appointed to reſtore from their diſperſion, the choſen poſterity of that renowned patriarch, who had gone aſtray like loſt ſheep, and to bring them into the favour of God, by means of his obedience unto death, and his goſpel, accompanied with his Spirit. He was deſtined to bring them into the paths of righteouſneſs from which they had departed; and to the enjoyment of the moſt important benefits promiſed to their fathers.—Be ſolicitous, brethren, that you may be brought back to God from whom you have departed, by the great Mediator; that, being bleſſed with his friendſhip, and the fruits of his loving kindneſs, you may henceforth live to his praiſe.

Though Iſrael be not gathered, &c. The Son of God was inveſted with the character of Jehovah's ſervant, 'that he might gather in the outcaſts of Iſ-'rael; that he might gather together in one the 'children of God that were ſcattered abroad *.' They were diſperſed among the nations of the earth, they were far from God, their iniquities having ſeparated between him and them, and they were at variance among themſelves as to their religious ſentiments and practices. Such, however, was the condeſcending grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would have gathered them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and as the ſhepherd gathereth the ſheep into the fold, but they would not be gathered. So great was the perverſe obſtinacy of that diſobedient gainſaying people, that they refuſed to comply with his gracious deſign; they would not hearken that their ſouls might live; they would

* John xi. 52.

would not come to him that they might have life.—*Yet ſhall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord.* Such is the dignity of my character, and the importance of the office aſſigned to me by Jehovah, that I ſhall certainly receive an ample reward, that ſhall fully compenſate all the labour to which I ſubmit to accompliſh the work in which I am engaged. He hath determined that I ſhall have the glory of being the Saviour, not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles, and of conducting from among all nations many ſons to glory. It muſt be as here affirmed; for he who aſſumed the form of a ſervant is the Son of the living God, the expreſs image of his perſon, who in his humbled ſtate yielded perfect obedience to his Father's will, that he might execute the deſigns of his love, and obtain the redemption of his choſen. How glorious then muſt he be, who having vanquiſhed by his death all the enemies of his kingdom, was raiſed from the dead, and ſet down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high.—*And my God ſhall be my ſtrength.* By his mighty power I ſhall be preſerved and ſuſtained, in performing the whole work that he hath given me to do, notwithſtanding every intervening obſtacle; therefore I ſhall not fail or be diſcouraged. The Hebrew word tranſlated ſtrength, ſignifies alſo praiſe or glory; and in this ſenſe the expreſſion imports, that my God, to whoſe honour and glory my ſervice is devoted, ſhall afford me ample ground to magnify him, on account of the continued ſupport I ſhall enjoy, in the execution of the arduous work I have undertaken.

6 And he ſaid, It is a light thing that thou ſhouldſt be my ſervant, to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to reſtore the preſerved of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto the end of the earth.

The

The Lord God who formed the Meſſiah declares, that the glory of ſaving the elect among the Jews being an inadequate reward for his humiliation and obedience, he would confer upon him a more glorious recompenſe, by giving him to be the light and ſalvation of the Gentiles.—*It is a light thing*, &c. too trivial an acknowledgment of thy laborious ſervices to exalt the children of Jacob from their depreſſed apoſtate condition. The poſterity of that Patriarch are well known to have been divided into twelve families or tribes, according to the number and names of his twelve ſons; in which were comprehended the choſen people whom God ſet apart for himſelf as his peculiar treaſure. To them the apoſtle James directed his epiſtle, and 'for the 'hope of the promiſe made of God unto their fa-'thers, (ſaid the apoſtle Paul), our twelve tribes in-'ſtantly ſerve God day and night *.' Theſe the Meſſiah was to raiſe from a low and ſervile condition to an honourable, comfortable ſtate, wherein they were to enjoy true dignity and happineſs.—He was to reſtore the preſerved, or rather the deſolations of Iſrael, which were gone into ruin, to reſcue them from the errors and prejudices they had imbibed, and the tranſgreſſions into which they had fallen; to introduce them into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and enrich them with the moſt precious bleſſings. This was the primary deſign of the Meſſiah being ſent into the world, the firſt part of the great work committed into his hand. To ſave even one ſinner from deſtruction is not a trivial but a moſt momentous buſineſs, much more to reſcue from perdition thouſands of thouſands. It was, however, comparatively light in reſpect of the conſummate dignity of the Redeemer's perſon, the infinite love which the Lord God bare to him, and the merit of his perfect obedience.—It is therefore added,

I will alſo give thee for a light to the Gentiles. By

* Acts xxvi. 7. 8.

the Gentiles are intended all the nations of the earth beſide the poſterity of Iſrael, who were ſitting in darkneſs, in the region and ſhadow of death, deſtitute of the knowledge of God and the way of ſalvation. How deplorable their condition! how aſtoniſhing the mercy of God in giving his own Son to be their light—to illuminate them by his word and Spirit with divine knowledge and wiſdom; to open the eyes of their minds to perceive their depravity, impurity, and impotence; to ſee his excellence and glory on whom God hath laid our help; to tranſlate them from the darkneſs of ignorance and ſin, into that marvellous light which proceeds from him who imphatically ſays of himſelf, 'I am the light of the world *.'—*That thou mayeſt be my ſalvation to the end of the earth.* The ſalvation of God compriſes deliverance from the greateſt evils, with the enjoyment of every bleſſing requiſite to conſummate felicity. The Meſſiah was given to be this ſalvation, that he might obtain it by his blood for people in the moſt remote regions of the earth, that he might ſend forth his ſervants generouſly to offer it to their acceptance, and that he might ſend down his Spirit from on high to diſpoſe them gratefully to accept of his gracious offers. Thus he becomes the light, and the ſalvation of God to the end of the earth.—What gratitude and praiſe are due to God from us for theſe ineſtimable benefits. Well doth it become every one who participates of their benign influence to adopt the triumphant acknowledgment expreſſed by the devout Pſalmiſt, 'The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, of whom ſhall I be afraid?' †

7 Thus ſaith the Lord, the Redeemer of Iſrael, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man deſpiſeth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a ſervant of rulers: kings ſhall ſee, and

* John viii. 12. † Pſal. xxvi. 1.

and ariſe; princes alſo ſhall worſhip; becauſe of the LORD, that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Iſrael, and he ſhall chooſe thee.

Theſe words, ſuggeſted to Iſaiah by the Holy Spirit, are addreſſed by Jehovah to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his body the church, who are comforted under the contempt and affliction they ſuſtained, with the aſſurance of future proſperity and glory. The character of Redeemer, which Jehovah appropriates to himſelf is highly ſuitable to the ſubject which is here introduced.—This diſcourſe is directed *to him whom man deſpiſeth.* This deſignation which peculiarly belongs to Jeſus Chriſt the Light and the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles, is alſo applicable to his church, compoſed of thoſe who, like their divine Maſter, are reproached and contemned by the world. We ſuppoſe, then, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt the head, not excluding the church, which is his body, are both compriſed in the deſcription before us. There is a rule of interpreting ſcripture, which ought to be attended to in explaining the paſſage under conſideration, that may be of great uſe in underſtanding the Pſalms, and of reſolving ſome difficulties, whereby expoſitors have been perplexed. The axiom is this, That Jeſus Chriſt and his church are frequently mentioned as one perſon, certain things being attributed to him that properly belong to them, and other things are aſcribed to them which chiefly refer to him, whilſt there are ſome things that are applicable to both. According to this maxim, 1. explain what is here ſaid, as relating chiefly to Jeſus Chriſt who, in his exterior appearance, had no beauty wherefore he ſhould be deſired, who lived in mean circumſtances, deſtitute of worldly pomp and ſplendor, often aſſociating with the common people. His doctrine that required internal as well as external ſanctity, was diametrically oppoſite to the corruptions and vices of mankind, and pointed out the

the neceſſity of an entire change of temper and practice, and of the righteouſneſs that is of God by faith. The natural man that receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, and particularly the carnal Jews, ſaw no form or comelineſs in him; but full of malice and prejudices they contemned and rejected him. They expected the Meſſiah would have appeared as a mighty Prince and Conqueror, and as he did not gratify their deſires they proudly deſpiſed him. Only a few, ſenſible of their ſpiritual indigence who were taught of God, unfeignedly embraced him and his ſalvation; whilſt the bulk of the people treated him with the greateſt indignity, and delivered him to the Roman governor to be crucified.—The words recorded by our Prophet may likewiſe refer to the church of Jeſus Chriſt, which hath often been treated with ſimilar contumely and deſpite. Though conſtituted of thoſe who are holy, unblameable, and uſeful in the world —of the excellent ones of the earth, they are a ſect that have been everywhere ſpoken againſt; they have been ſcourged, bound, impriſoned, and put to death with the moſt excruciating torments.—*To a ſervant of rulers*, a character that well agrees to Jeſus Chriſt, who, though the Prince of the kings of the earth, ſubjected himſelf to the rulers of the Jewiſh nation, paying tribute to the government when it was demanded *. He alſo ſubmitted to the authority of the Roman governor, who could have had no power at all over him, unleſs it had been given him from above †. Beſides, the ſervice that he performed was intended for the benefit of thoſe who preſide over men, that are ſo wiſe as ariſe and worſhip him. This ſubjection, however, was limited to certain circumſtances; for when the glory of God and the exerciſe of his office required, he demonſtrated his power and authority, and ſhewed, that he was Lord of the Sabbath; that he preſided over all elements, and could control every adverſe

* Matth. xvii. 24. † John xix. 11.

adverſe power. Similar to this hath often been the ſtate of the church, who, for conſcience ſake, hath always been ſubject to the powers that are ordained of God, and hath yielded eſſential ſervice to the governors and rulers of the kingdoms of this earth.

To him whom the nation abhorreth. The nation chiefly intended was that of the Jews, by whom Jeſus Chriſt was alledged to have been in compact with Beelzebub the prince of the devils, to have been poſſeſſed with a devil, to have been a glutton, a winebiber, a friend of publicans and ſinners, a falſe prophet, a blaſphemer, a ſeditious perſon. In few words, they held him as deteſtible and execrable, deſerving the death of the croſs to which he was conſigned. And as for thoſe who believed on him, they were deteſted of all men, they were held as the dregs of the people, the filth and the offſcouring of all things, inſomuch that thoſe who killed them thought that they did God ſervice.—It hath been ſaid, that if virtue appeared in a human form, it would have been eſteemed and worſhipped. The truth is, perfect goodneſs, God himſelf appeared in the likeneſs of man, to accompliſh the moſt benevolent purpoſes; and in that form he was rejected, deſpiſed, crucified, and ſlain.

Kings ſhall ſee and ariſe. The potentates, the princes, and great men of the earth, ſhall contemplate with enlightened underſtandings the conſummate excellence and glory of the Meſſiah's perſon, the truth and importance of his doctrine, the magnitude and worth of the ſalvation he hath obtained for mankind; they ſhall cordially embrace the goſpel, and thankfully receive the good tidings it contains. In conſequence whereof, they ſhall *ariſe and worſhip.* The expreſſion hath an obvious reference to the well known cuſtom of perſons, who teſtify their reſpect and honour for their ſuperiors, whom they highly eſteem, by ariſing in their preſence and bowing before them. The words ſtrongly

ly intimate, the profound reverence and high honour which the illuſtrious characters here mentioned were to manifeſt to the great Mediator, and by him through the Spirit to the God and Father of all. This is an event which, to human view, may ſeem rather to be wiſhed than expected. That the monarchs and princes of this earth who delight in worldly ſplendor and glory, and are elated with their eminent ſtation and extenſive dominion, ſhould receive the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, adverſe to carnal deſires, and contemptible in the view of thoſe who are wiſe in their own eyes—that they ſhould humbly proſtrate themſelves before him, ſubject themſelves to his goſpel, and enter into communion with his church, is truly ſurpriſing. But however paradoxical it may appear, the world hath ſeen many inſtances of the truth of this prediction, which ſhall be more fully verified when all the kingdoms of this earth ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt.—Haſten, bleſſed God, the happy time when, according to thy word *, the Gentiles ſhall ſee thy righteouſneſs, and all kings thy glory.

Becauſe of the Lord that is faithful, &c. The above aſſurance reſpecting the proſperity of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, is eſtabliſhed on the unchangeable veracity and fidelity of Jehovah, and on his untainted purity and perfect rectitude, who is ſanctified by his people, and who ſanctifies them. On this ſure ground of confident expectation doth the Meſſiah and his church build their conſolation, under the reproaches and afflictions to which they are now expoſed.—That nothing may be wanting to confirm this pleaſing hope, it is added, *And he ſhall chooſe thee*, or, as the Hebrew words may be tranſlated, 'For he hath choſen thee,' and ſet thee apart to accompliſh the moſt glorious purpoſes.—In all your diſquietudes and fears, endeavour to give to God the glory of his faithfulneſs and holineſs, by placing

* Iſa. lxii. 2.

placing unſuſpecting confidence in the veracity of his promiſes, which ſhall be fulfilled in their ſeaſon.

8 Thus ſaith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of ſalvation have I helped thee: and I will preſerve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to eſtabliſh the earth, to cauſe to inherit the deſolate heritages.

A glorious promiſe lies now before us, expreſſing what Jehovah had done, and would farther do for promoting the ſucceſs of the goſpel in the converſion of the Gentiles, and for collecting them into the church of God. The declaration is introduced with our Prophet's accuſtomed ſolemnity, who often prefixes the name of Jehovah, to the predictions of peculiar excellence and importance which he was entruſted to deliver. The ſubject to whom the aſſurance is given, is ſuppoſed to be in an afflicted ſtate, expoſed to the hatred and envy, the reproach and perſecution of malicious adverſaries.—The ſeaſon of the divine interpoſition, is ſpecified to have been *an accepted time and day of ſalvation*. The memorable period wherein the Son of God was manifeſted in the fleſh, to teſtify good will toward men, to proclaim peace on earth, to offer himſelf a ſacrifice well-pleaſing unto the Lord, to put an end to ſin, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, wherein a plentiful effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt was given from on high. That was a choſen time indeed for advancing the kingdom of God. It was a day of ſalvation wherein the redemption of the church was accompliſhed by the death of the Son of God, wherein God was well pleaſed for his righteouſneſs' ſake, the Spirit was poured out abundantly, and happy preludes were enjoyed that the ſalvation of the Lord was to be extended to the ends

of

of the earth.—In this memorable period Johovah declares to the Meſſiah,

I have heard thee, &c. This comfortable truth was acknowledged by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf at the grave of Lazarus. 'Father, ſaid he, I thank thee 'that thou haſt heard me, and I knew that thou 'heareſt me always *.' 'The Lord always gave 'him his heart's deſire, and did not withhold from 'him the requeſt of his lips †.' He granted him his deſires both for himſelf and his church; 'for in 'the days of his fleſh, when he had offered up pray-'ers and ſupplications, with ſtrong crying and tears 'unto him that was able to ſave him from death, 'he was heard in that he feared ‡.'—*I have helped thee.* Had he not been ſupported by the arm of omnipotence, he could not have oppoſed the powers of darkneſs; he could not have vanquiſhed his own and his people's enemies; he could not have endured the curſe of the law, nor obtained the ſalvation of the church. The Lord God therefore aſſiſted him as he promiſed, to perform the whole work of Mediator, to ſurmount every obſtacle that lay in his way, and to ſuſtain all the ſufferings to which he was appointed.—*And I will preſerve thee.* This promiſe was accompliſhed to the Meſſiah, and is fulfilled to his body the church in every age. During the time that Jeſus Chriſt tabernacled among men, he was the peculiar object of the divine care and protection. In infancy he was reſcued from the cruel deſign of Herod, who ſought to take away his life. The Almighty gave his angels charge concerning him, to keep him in all his ways. When the Jews ſought to ſlay him; ſo powerfully were they reſtrained by Divine providence that no man laid hands on him. Thoſe who are acquainted with the goſpel hiſtory, may recollect many remarkable inſtances of the truth before us, which I ſtay not to recite.

Agreeable to the rule of interpretation, I mentioned

* John xi. 41, 42. † Pſalm xxi. 2. ‡ Heb. v. 7.

tioned when explaining the preceding verſe what is ſaid in relation to Jeſus Chriſt, is in ſome meaſure applicable to his body the church. On this principle the apoſtle Paul writing to the ſaints at Corinth, applies to them the words of our Prophet, 'We 'then (ſaith he) as workers together with him;' namely, with Jeſus Chriſt of whom he was ſpeaking; beſeech you alſo that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. For he ſaith, 'I have heard thee 'in a time accepted, and in the day of ſalvation 'have I ſuccoured thee: behold, now is the accept-'ed time, behold now is the day of ſalvation *.' The words of our Prophet are introduced as a powerful argument, to enforce the exhortation to which they are ſubjoined. Since God, my brethren, hath favoured us as he did the church at Corinth, with an accepted time, a ſeaſon of unmerited rich grace, a day of ſalvation wherein he is diſpenſing the moſt precious bleſſings; let us beware leſt we receive this grace in vain. Now the Lord God declares, I have heard, or I will hear thee. Hath not he heard the voice of thy ſupplication when thou criedſt unto him, and in his faithfulneſs anſwered thee? And in time of danger and diſtreſs he will hear thy earneſt requeſts, and grant thee ſupport and deliverance.—I have helped, and will help thee, to improve benefits and opportunities, to reſiſt temptations, to bear afflictions, to perform ſervices, and to walk in the paths of righteouſneſs; ſo that you ſhall have reaſon to ſay, 'happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, 'whoſe hope is in the Lord his God †.' I will preſerve thee from all evil, amidſt enemies, ſnares, and perils, and keep thee in perfect ſafety. I will preſerve thy goings out and comings in, from henceforth, even for evermore.—In this manner have theſe promiſes which were accompliſhed to the Meſſiah been fulfilled to his myſtical body the church, in every age. Diligently improve then the preci-

* 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. † Pſalm cxlvi. 5.

ous ſeaſon, the time of merciful viſitation you now enjoy. The darkneſs of night is paſt, the ſhadows of Judaiſm are gone, the miſt of ſuperſtition is diſpelled, the ſun of righteouſneſs hath ariſen, the true light now ſhineth, the day of ſalvation is far ſpent, and may cloſe ſooner than ſome of you are aware: 'Work out then your ſalvation with fear and trem-'bling, for it is God that worketh in you both to 'will and to do of his good pleaſure *.'

And give thee for a covenant of the people. Our Prophet, after having mentioned ſome things common to the head and body of the church, proceeds to ſpecify other particulars peculiar to the Meſſiah. To the foregoing aſſurances are ſubjoined the glorious purpoſes to be effected by their accompliſhment. I will give thee in the moſt liberal and gracious manner, that thou mayeſt open a friendly intercourſe between heaven and earth, that by the ſuffering of death thou mayeſt ratify and confirm my promiſes, become Surety for the diſcharge of the debts contracted by my choſen people, and for their performance of the duties of obedience. The Meſſiah juſtly deſerves this deſignation, inaſmuch as he is the Mediator of the covenant, through whom it is eſtabliſhed, the meſſenger by whom it was publiſhed, the conveyer, and the ſum of all the bleſſings it contains.—*To eſtabliſh the earth*, &c. This expreſſion ſeems to allude to the deſolate ſtate of kingdoms and cities laid waſte by the calamities of war, which after peace is re-eſtabliſhed are reſtored to a flouriſhing proſperous condition. A ſimilar happy change is foretold to be effected by Jeſus Chriſt, who was ſupported and preſerved by divine power. The earth and the deſolate heritages denote thoſe nations which for long time had not brought forth any good ſpiritual fruits acceptable to God, and profitable to themſelves, and which were in a forlorn deplorable ſtate when the foundations of the church were laid by the Meſſiah. Having

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

ving never been cultivated by the ſervants of God, illuminated by the Sun of righteouſneſs, ſown with the precious ſeed of the word of God, nor watered by the dew of heaven, they reſembled a vaſt barren deſart. Their minds were enveloped in ignorance, occupied by falſe prejudices, vain imaginations, and the ſeeds of all manner of vice, which required much labour, accompanied with the divine bleſſing, to eradicate them.—*This earth*, theſe deſolate heritages, the Meſſiah was to raiſe from their low unprofitable condition; and having converted them from error and tranſgreſſion, he was to eſtabliſh among them order and diſcipline, and to render them by the miniſtry of his ſervants comely and fruitful. He was to cauſe his people, the heirs of ſalvation, to inherit thoſe places, that, as the royal Prophet foretold, 'they might dwell there, and have 'them in poſſeſſion. The ſeed alſo of his ſervants 'ſhall inherit them, and they that love his name 'ſhall dwell therein *.' In conſequence whereof, the corruptions, prejudices, and vicious practices that had prevailed were in a great meaſure to be exterminated, the ſeeds of holineſs and righteouſneſs being ſown and cheriſhed by divine influences, were to bring forth fruit unto life everlaſting.—What gratitude and praiſe are due to the Lord God, who freely gave his own Son to accompliſh this bleſſed purpoſe—and to Jeſus Chriſt, who hath fulfilled this prediction by his apoſtles and miniſters, who being members of his body the church, are here ſpoken of as one perſon with him by whom they were employed.

9 That thou mayeſt ſay to the priſoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkneſs, Shew yourſelves. They ſhall feed in the ways, and their paſtures *ſhall be* in all high places.

The appointed means are ſpecified whereby the

* Pſal. lxix. 35, 36.

the important end juſt mentioned was to be effected.—The people to whom this call to liberty and light was to be directed, are priſoners, and them that ſit in darkneſs. The deſcription may comprize both Jews and Gentiles, to whom it well agrees in the figurative ſenſe of the words. The Jews eſpecially were ſo confined by the law of Moſes, that they could not move or act beyond the narrow limits that it preſcribed. Such a heavy yoke was thereby impoſed upon them, that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear it. Beſides, they were held faſt by the cords of their iniquities, and detained in the fetters of corruption from the enjoyment of true liberty.—The Gentiles were ſitting in darkneſs, ſhut up in unbelief, blinded by ignorance, prejudice, and corrupt affections, deſtitute of the light of divine knowledge, ſo that they did not perceive the moſt glorious and important objects. To the former the command was to be given, *Go forth* from your confinement, that being ſet free from ſin, and delivered from the curſe of the law, you may enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God, and participate of all the immunities which the Meſſiah confers on his peculiar people. As this charge proceeds from the higheſt authority, it demands prompt and chearful obedience. To the latter the order is directed, *Shew yourſelves.* Come to the light, that your deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought in God, that you may ſee yourſelves, and be ſeen by others, in your true character; and that henceforth you may walk as children of the light, who poſſeſs divine knowledge, true holineſs, and abundant conſolation. Hearken to the gracious invitation which requires you to exchange darkneſs for light, the ſhadow of death for the land of the living, the way to deſtruction for the path of life.

They ſhall feed in the ways, &c. The eloquence of our Prophet acting under the direction of the Holy Spirit is truly admirable. Having repreſented

Jews

Jews and Gentiles as being in priſon and in darkneſs, from whence they were to be reſcued by the miniſtry of the goſpel, he now ſpeaks of the church collected from among the kingdoms of the earth, under the well known emblem of a flock feeding in commodious paſtures, under the care of the good ſhepherd. The people that are the ſubjects of this prediction are thoſe who having been delivered from the bondage of corruption, and the power of darkneſs, are united together by the Spirit in one ſociety, under the conduct of Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the ſheep, who feeds them by means of his word, and the ordinances of the goſpel. Of this flock it is ſaid, they ſhall feed in the ways; not in barren unfrequented countries in which there are no public roads, ſuch as the deſerts of Arabia, but in places where are patent high ways, occupied by numbers of paſſengers.—*And their paſtures ſhall be in all high places;* in fruitful hills and mountains, well ſheltered by trees, and well watered by ſprings and ſtreams of water. Under this well known ſymbol the church of Jeſus Chriſt is foretold to be collected by him, from obſcure remote places of the earth, called deſolate heritages: in parabolic language, from high ways and hedges, that they may poſſeſs the richeſt and moſt populous countries in the world, where they were to feed with ſafety and pleaſure on the ſpiritual proviſion made for them. Thus it came to paſs in the early period of Chriſtianity, as we learn from the Acts of the Apoſtles. The faithful diſciples of the Son of God were gathered together in Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Corinth, Epheſus, Theſſalonica, and many other places of great eminence, where by ſound doctrine they were nouriſhed up unto eternal life.—Let us be ſolicitous to find ſpiritual paſture and refreſhment to our ſouls, in all the various ways wherein Jeſus Chriſt is pleaſed to conduct us, in the ways of his precepts, of his providence, and the inſtitutions of

his

his worſhip, in which his followers enjoy the moſt important ſpiritual benefits.

10 They ſhall not hunger nor thirſt; neither ſhall the heat nor ſun ſmite them: for he that hath mercy on them ſhall lead them, even by the ſprings of water ſhall he guide them.

The church of Jeſus Chriſt is aſſured of abundance of ſpiritual proviſion, with which they ſhall be ſatisfied and delighted.—Hunger and thirſt, properly ſpeaking, is the appetite for food and drink that are neceſſary to ſupply the wants, and to recruit the decays of natural life. Theſe uneaſy ſenſations, which ariſe from a preſent deficiency of the means requiſite to allay them, are ſometimes mentioned in ſcripture, to repreſent the deplorable ſtate of people who are deſtitute of what they moſt earneſtly deſire, and of what is eſſential to their comfort. In their ſpiritual ſenſe, they denote the intenſe deſires of the ſoul for the means of ſalvation, communion with God, his kingdom, and righteouſneſs, with all the fruits of the divine favour, which are well known to Chriſtians by experience. —In this view, the prediction imports that the church collected from among Jews and Gentiles, were not to ſuffer from the want of any thing neceſſary to their ſupport and conſolation—that God would ſo take care of them by his providence, and afford them neceſſary ſupplies of what they needed, that they ſhould not lack any good thing, but have all their wants ſupplied from his riches in glory by Chriſt Jeſus. Having brought forth his peculiar people from ſpiritual bondage into the wilderneſs of the Gentiles, he gave them from heaven the true bread, he ſuſtained them by means of the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus; he gave them alſo the water of life, the word of truth, and the gifts of the Spirit,

Spirit, which flow from the Rock of ages, that was ſtricken and ſmitten of God. In this manner thoſe who are made kings and prieſts unto God, and ſerve him in his temple, are nouriſhed and comforted according to the prophecies delivered under the Old Teſtament, where it is foretold, 'the meek ſhall 'eat and be ſatisfied *.' 'And I will ſatiate the 'ſoul of the prieſts with fatneſs, and my people 'ſhall be ſatisfied with my goodneſs, ſaith the 'Lord †.' And in the words of our Prophet, *they ſhall not hunger nor thirſt.*—This prediction, which was in ſome meaſure fulfilled in the early period of the Chriſtian church, ſhall hereafter be fully accompliſhed, when, according to the apoſtle John, they that are arrayed in white robes 'ſhall hunger 'no more, neither thirſt any more ‡.' They ſhall be free from all uneaſy deſires of things earthly and ſenſual; and they ſhall enjoy pleaſing ſatisfaction in abundance of ſpiritual bleſſings, and the conſolations they afford.

Neither ſhall the heat nor ſun ſmite them. The ſcorching heat of the ſun about noon in warm climates, is very diſtreſſing to travellers, and uneaſy even to the cattle paſturing in the fields; and therefore ſhepherds led their flocks to reſt at mid-day near ſprings or ſtreams of water, under the ſhadow of trees, or rocks, until the heat abated. In alluſion to this well known practice, the promiſe under conſideration is made to the church, in which they are aſſured that at the time referred to, they ſhall be protected from the conſuming heat of affliction and perſecution, from diſtreſſing apprehenſions of the divine diſpleaſure, and fiery trials—that the Lord God ſhall mercifully ſcreen them from impending dangers and calamities, and grant them to reſt ſecurely in the comfortable enjoyment of the privileges they enjoy. 'The ſun ſhall not ſmite them 'by day, nor the moon by night §.' Neither political

* Pſal. xxii. 27. † Jer. xxxi. 14. ‡ Rev. vii. 16.
§ Pſal. cxxi. 6.

tical nor eccleſiaſtical power ſhall be permitted eſſentially to injure them. For wiſe reaſons God may ſuffer them to feel the burning heat of affliction, but it ſhall not ſmite or deſtroy them. Like a furnace it ſhall ſerve to refine them from corruption; like a fan it ſhall ſeparate them from the chaff; as a medicine it ſhall cure them of their fatal diſtempers, and purge them that they may bring forth more fruit unto God. Do you aſk where and when hath this prediction been verified to the church, which hath been often afflicted and perſecuted? I reply, That this promiſe ſeems eſpecially to refer to the period wherein the people of God being delivered from diſtreſs, kings ſhall ſee, and ariſe, and bow down to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. In ſome meaſure it hath already been accompliſhed, and ſhall receive its completion in the expected glorious ſtate of the church before the conſummation of all things.—During our journey through this world, may the Lord God be our defence from the ſultry beams of proſperity, and the conſuming heat of perſecution.—*For he that hath mercy on them*, &c. He who when they were in a forlorn miſerable and helpleſs ſtate, extended his compaſſion to them, forgave them all treſpaſſes, admitted them into favour, and formed them to ſhew forth his praiſes—He who is emphatically denominated the Father of mercies, the God of all conſolation; who comforteth his people in all their afflictions, who ſupplies their neceſſities, and preſerves them from calamities—He ſhall lead them and afford them ſuch good conduct as the cloud gave to the Iſraelites, and be to them what the guide is to the wandering traveller. He gives them good counſel by his word, he points out the courſe they ought to take, and effectually diſpoſes them to follow his direction.—*Even by the ſprings of water ſhall he guide them.* The reviving truths, and inſtituted ordinances of the goſpel, which impart refreſhment and conſolation to the people of God, are, I ſuppoſe, here intended. Like ſprings of water

ter they are permanent ſources from whence are conveyed to the flock of Jeſus Chriſt, the moſt ſeaſonable relief and comfort, whereby the minds of his followers are revived and ſolaced. In conſequence of drinking the water that he gives them, they ſhall never thirſt after thoſe criminal enjoyments, for which they have loſt all reliſh. The water, ſaith Jeſus Chriſt, that I ſhall give him, ſpeaking of the Spirit which they that believe on him ſhould receive, ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life *. They ſhall be abundantly gratified with conſtant ſupplies of his grace and Spirit, according to the prediction of the apoſtle John, recorded Rev. vii. 17. 'For the Lamb which 'is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall lead them 'unto living fountains of waters,' &c.—Be ſolicitous to improve this inſtance of the paſtoral care of Jeſus Chriſt, whereby he ſhews that he is the good ſhepherd, who not only delivers his people from whatever might eſſentially hurt them, but ſupplies them with his word and ordinances, whereby their faith, holineſs, and comfort is preſerved and promoted.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my high-ways ſhall be exalted.

Every obſtacle was to be removed by divine Providence that might have impeded the increaſe of the church of God by the acceſſion of the Gentiles. —The predictions contained in this and the verſe that immediately follows, may in their literal ſenſe refer to the return of the Jews from captivity at Babylon to their own land. That they might not be diſcouraged by the difficulties of the journey, God was to open a paſſage for them over thoſe mountains that were ſituated between Babylon and Judea, which he himſelf had formed and eſtabliſhed, and which were remarkable for height, and their formidable

* John iv. 14.

midable appearance to travellers. In their figurative ſenſe, the words relate to the church of Chriſt, compoſed of thoſe who believe in him and keep his word, whether Jews or Gentiles. At the time wherein God was to call the heathen nations into the communion of the church, thoſe kingdoms of the world, which in prophetic language are called mountains, that ſeemed to obſtruct the progreſs and ſpread of the goſpel, were to be overthrown or reduced to ſuch a ſtate, that people dwelling in the moſt flouriſhing cultivated countries of the earth, might be admitted into the church, and the word of God might be diſſeminated with the greateſt advantage. Theſe events could hardly have been expected, had theſe empires remained in their former ſtate. The kingdoms therefore and capital cities which were addicted to idolatry, ſuperſtition, and wickedneſs, and adverſe to the church of Jeſus Chriſt, were to be ſubjected to his government; that the converſion of the Gentiles might be rendered more practicable and eaſy. In this manner many ancient prophecies were to be accompliſhed, ſuch as the following—'The mountains ſhall bring peace to 'the people, and the little hills by righteouſneſs *.'

And my high ways ſhall be exalted. The high ways of Jehovah may denote the important doctrines and precepts of his holy word, which mark out the way whereby the faith and practice of the church is to be regulated, that they may walk ſo as to pleaſe God. Not only was every thing to be removed that might hinder the advancement of the goſpel and kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, but the truths and ways of God were to be vindicated, clearly pointed out, and laid open to the view of all, as the only true approved way of life and ſalvation. Theſe high ways of truth and holineſs were to be exalted, and raiſed to great eminence in the view of mankind by the public protection that was to be afforded them; in conſequence whereof, people might

* Pſalm lxxii. 3.

might walk in them without fear or moleſtation.—Theſe predictions have been amply verified. The faith and practice of the church hath been clearly ſet forth by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles in their diſcourſes and writings, which have been explained, illuſtrated, and defended by writers of the greateſt abilities; ſo that the ways of God have been exalted, and rendered highly conſpicuous to the public view.—In theſe ways let us endeavour to walk with increaſing alacrity; then ſhall we be ſafe and free from fear of evil; we ſhall find them ſtrength to the upright, and experience that they are ways of pleaſantneſs.

12 Behold, theſe ſhall come from far: and, lo, theſe from the north, and from the weſt; and theſe from the land of Sinim.

In conſequence of the fulfilment of the preceding predictions, the Gentiles were to reſort in great numbers from all the quarters of the earth into the church of Jeſus Chriſt. This very pleaſing ſight the ſervants of God are invited to behold. Contemplate with attention, wonder, and joy, the admirable effects that ſhall reſult from the accompliſhment of what hath juſt been foretold. Thoſe who were priſoners and ſitting in darkneſs, ſhall come into the communion of the church from the diſtant eaſtern kingdoms of Perſia, Aſſyria, Chaldea, and the countries ſituated to the eaſtward of the land of Judea.—*And, lo, theſe from the north*, from the leſſer Aſia, Europe, and Tartary—*And from the weſt*, from Greece, Italy, and Spain—*And theſe from the land of Sinim.* Sin or Sinim was the name of a ſtrong city in the land of Egypt; and may here be intended to ſignify Egypt, Sheba, and Arabia, which lay to the ſouthward of Canaan. This prediction is illuſtrated by Jeſus Chriſt, in theſe remarkable words recorded Matth. viii. 11. 'Many 'ſhall come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſhall ſit 'down

'down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the king-'dom of heaven.' People of all nations ſhall come from every quarter to participate with the renowned patriarchs of ancient times, in the precious bleſſings to be enjoyed by the ſubjects of the Prince of the kings of the earth. The Chriſtian church, the redeemed of the Lord, ſhall be gathered out of all lands, to enjoy the great ſubſtantial benefits to which the forefathers of the Jewiſh people looked forward thro' the types and promiſes that were given them.—In this proſpect, let us celebrate the rich mercy and grace whereby ſinners of the Gentiles are brought into the church of God, and admitted into communion with him and his upright ſervants. From the partial accompliſhment of predictions and promiſes, which hath already taken place; from the glorious ſucceſs which in times paſt hath attended the goſpel of our Lord and Saviour; from his infinite compaſſion, his omnipotence, and inviolable faithfulneſs; let us be encouraged to hope, that ſtreams of mercy and grace ſhall flow from the fountain of life in every direction, to all the nations of the earth. May Almighty God, grant his benediction to the appointed means employed by his ſervants, to promote this valuable purpoſe.

13 ¶ Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into ſinging, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

The heavens, the earth, and the mountains, are called upon to expreſs gratitude and praiſe, for the ineſtimable benefits conferred upon the church of Jeſus Chriſt. Tranſported with a view of theſe grand events that are the ſubject of this prophecy; Iſaiah exults in triumphant ſtrains, inviting the whole creation to break forth into ſinging, to celebrate the glories of redemption, and to join in a

chorus

chorus of thankſgiving to him who ſaves and comforts his people. New mercies and wonders, demand new ſongs of praiſe. Though I have had repeated opportunities of illuſtrating ſimilar calls to adoring gratitude, I am not diſpoſed to paſs over this demand in ſilence, which is addreſſed to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. Theſe expreſſions may be conſidered as comprehending univerſal nature, with all the conſtituent parts whereof it is compoſed. Viewing them in this light, they forcibly intimate, that were the ſun, the moon, the ſtars, and the clouds, poſſeſſed of reaſon, underſtanding, and ſenſibility; that were the earth and the mountains, with the ſeveral parts of which this globe is compoſed, capable of perceiving the excellence of the benefits which were to be conferred on the church, they would exult and triumph in the author of all felicity. Or the words may be underſtood, as addreſſed to the rational inhabitants that reſide in the regions of the univerſe, which are here ſpecified, namely, to angels and celeſtial intelligences, and to people of every deſcription, that dwell on the face of the whole earth. In either ſenſe, they ſerve to ſhew the vaſt amplitude and ineſtimable worth of thoſe benefits which afford abundant ground of univerſal joy and gladneſs. So great is the benevolence and kindneſs of Jehovah to his church, that all his creatures, animate and inanimate, intelligent and irrational, ſhould all unite, were they capable, in magnifying his wonderful grace, and in making a joyful noiſe to the rock of ſalvation.—The reaſons of this gratulation are ſubjoined.

For the Lord hath comforted his people. The objects of his tender compaſſion are his people, his afflicted, that he hath choſen from among Jews and Gentiles for his peculiar treaſure—who ſhare in his redemption—who participate of his Spirit—who are bleſſed with the fruits of his loving-kindneſs—and walk in his law.—His afflicted, who are diſtreſſed with

with outward and inward troubles of various kinds, which, though grievous for the preſent, yet through the divine operation and bleſſing, prove ſubſervient for advancing their beſt intereſts. The Hebrew word tranſlated afflicted, ſignifies alſo poor—thoſe who are poor in ſpirit, who think ſoberly of themſelves, who preſume not to depend on their own merits and abilities, but in the righteouſneſs and grace of Chriſt, who hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, and wait for the conſolation of Iſrael. Beſides, many of them are in mean afflicted circumſtances in this world. People of theſe deſcriptions God is pleaſed to comfort. Under the former diſpenſation they were ſolaced with the hope of the great Meſſiah, the author of redemption, righteouſneſs, liberty, and conſolation, who was to give ſatisfying proofs of the divine favour and preſence, and the expectation of eternal glory. By him the Gentiles were to be delivered from the darkneſs in which for ages they had been involved, they were to be brought to the knowledge of ſalvation by the remiſſion of ſins, and to obtain inheritance among them that are ſanctified. The Lord will comfort them under their fears and trials, by the diſpenſation of his providence, by the truths, the promiſes, the precepts of his word, by the teſtimonies of his tender affection, and by the communications of his Spirit.—*He will have mercy upon his afflicted*, by adapting their afflictions to their neceſſities and circumſtances, by moderating their diſtreſſes, by ſupporting them under their preſſure, and by ſending them ſeaſonable deliverance. Though there may be ſometimes an apparent inconſiſtency between this promiſe and the diſpenſations of providence; rather ſuſpect the juſtice of your apprehenſions than the faithfulneſs of God. When his paths ſeem to be in the great waters, depend upon his unchangeable veracity. Learn to diſtinguiſh between what you ſuppoſe might be moſt proper for you, and that which is beſt in the

view

view of infinite wiſdom. And would you be ſenſible of the mercy of God in your afflictions, judge not of them ſeparately, but in their connection with other circumſtances, and the gracious deſigns which they are intended to promote.—Such is the tender compaſſion of Jehovah manifeſted in the above predicted events, and ſuch the immenſe worth of the promiſed benefits, that the heavens and the earth, the celeſtial and terreſtrial inhabitants, have ſet before them abundant matter of joy and praiſe.—Whilſt the whole creation, viſible and inviſible, are required to join in thankſgiving to God, let each of us call upon himſelf with David, ſaying, 'Bleſs 'the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me 'bleſs his holy name *,'

14. But Zion ſaid, The LORD hath forſaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.

Notwithſtanding the aſtoniſhing grace, the peculiar care, and precious promiſes of Jehovah, the deſponding church are introduced complaining of their calamitous diſtreſſed condition. This highly favoured ſociety, conſtituted of the objects of God's tender affection, protected by his providence, enriched with the bleſſings of his ſalvation, and honoured with his gracious preſence, are brought forward under the well known deſignation of Zion, preferring this mournful complaint, this moving expoſtulation, *The Lord hath forſaken me*, &c. Jehovah who in times paſt reſcued me from dangers, defended me from enemies, redreſſed my grievances, and heard my prayers—The Lord who is my Shepherd, that led me to green paſtures, my Phyſician, who healed my ſpiritual diſtempers, my Counſellor, who conducted me in the paths of righteouſneſs, my Friend, my Father, and my God, who hath been my rock, my fortreſs, and ſhield, from whom

* Pſal. ciii. 1.

whom all my comforts proceeded, and in communion with whom I have experienced the higheſt ſatisfaction and delight. This gracious God who is my Lord, hath forſaken, hath forgotten me. Though, properly ſpeaking, forgetfulneſs cannot be attributed to God, yet it is aſcribed to him in ſcripture, when he doth not manifeſt his kind attention and compaſſionate regards to his people, which they had formerly enjoyed. He is ſaid to forſake thoſe from whom he withholds the fruits of his favour, who ſeem diveſted of his gracious protection, and expoſed to various calamities. In this ſenſe, we explain the awful threatening denounced againſt falſe prophets, 'Behold, ſaith the Lord, I, 'even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forſake 'you *.' The citizens of Zion who lamented in plaintive ſtrains their deplorable condition, muſt have been deprived of their moſt valued enjoyments, and greatly diſtreſſed by diſappointments, reproaches, and calamities, whilſt God did not appear to regard their forlorn ſtate, nor to grant their ſupplications. They muſt have been much depreſſed, becauſe the Lord God had withdrawn from them his former loving-kindneſſes, whereby they had been refreſhed and comforted, and had permitted them in deſpondency to bewail their bereavements.—Such ſeems to have been the mournful condition of the Chriſtian church not long after the commencement of the New Teſtament diſpenſation; when the rulers of this world began cruelly to perſecute them, and falſe teachers endeavoured to corrupt Chriſtianity. Then, according to the prediction of their Lord, the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt were delivered up to be afflicted and killed, and hated of all nations for his name's ſake †. The complaint hath been renewed in every age, by thoſe who have been deeply affected with their excluſion from the important advantages with which in times paſt they had been favoured.

15 Can

* Jer. xxiii. 39. † Matth. xxiv. 9.

15 Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

To remove the complaint of the afflicted church, the Holy Spirit adminiſters conſolation admirably adapted to deſpel their fears and ſorrows. It is expreſsly denied, that God can ever forget his people, or fail to have mercy upon them; he can no more neglect them than the tender hearted mother can forget her ſucking infant that is the object of her delight and ſolicitude. The queſtion here aſked is directed to the heart, it carries the force of the ſtrongeſt negation, and appeals to one of the innate and moſt powerful principles in human nature, founded on the conſtitution of things, on experience, and ſentiments generally received. There is a peculiar emphaſis in every word that claims attention.—*Can a woman*, one who hath not laid aſide the tender feelings proper to her ſex? Mothers, or rather monſters of inhumanity and cruelty, there have been who, diveſted of parental affection, have imbrued their hands in the blood of their young children. Mothers there have been in ſuch circumſtances of extraordinary diſtreſs, who, notwithſtanding their fond affection for their infants, could neither remember nor ſhew them compaſſion. Mothers of the moſt amiable diſpoſitions may not conſtantly bear in mind their children when grown up in years, and in ſome meaſure capable of providing for themſelves. But the child that needs unremitting attention and care, an affectionate mother cannot neglect to give it every aſſiſtance in her power, and to perform all thoſe kind offices which maternal tenderneſs almoſt never fails to ſuggeſt.—*Yea, they may forget*, in ſome caſes it is poſſible, and in ſome inſtances it hath happened. Though mothers may be deficient in affection and duty to their little infants—*Yet will not I*

forget thee, I whoſe tender mercies fail not, whoſe love is unchangeable, and who am not ſubject to the weakneſs and inconſtancy of human nature—I will not forget you whom I have adopted into my family, and to whom I have extended my kind affection, but will afford you ſeaſonable relief in all your afflictions and ſorrows. The compariſon here inſtituted evinces, in the moſt ſtriking manner, the infinite ſuperiority of the tender compaſſion which Jehovah never ceaſes to diſcover for his peculiar people, to the pity ſhewn by the moſt tender hearted mother to the child that was formed and nouriſhed in her womb, that was ſuckled, embraced, and cheriſhed by her with the fondeſt ſatisfaction. Such is the intimate endearing connection and affection ſubſiſting between God and his church, conſtituted of his regenerated children, who are ſaid to be born of him, who are nouriſhed, protected, and comforted by him. Theſe dear children of the Moſt High he embraces with exquiſite delight, he keeps them as the apple of his eye, he confers upon them the moſt important bleſſings, and advances them through Jeſus Chriſt to be heirs of eternal glory. This gracious regard, joined with the immutability and faithfulneſs of Jehovah, gives his ſaints the moſt ſatisfying ſecurity that he will never forget or forſake them.—Of this comfortable truth, the infant church of Jeſus Chriſt enjoyed the moſt pleaſant proofs. Being the objects of the divine love and care, every circumſtance in their condition was minutely attended to, and though deſtitute of human aid, they were ſuſtained, preſerved, and trained up to maturity by God himſelf. And ever ſince that early period, they have experienced the accompliſhment of the reviving declaration which hath now been illuſtrated.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms

palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

Another ground of conſolation is laid open to the afflicted church, which we are invited to contemplate. The language employed to deſcribe this diſtinguiſhing privilege, is figurative, and alludes to the practice of an architect who intends to build or repair a houſe or city. This artiſt draws an accurate plan of the work he deſigns to execute, with all its ſeveral parts, according to their exact proportions, which he keeps in his hand ever ready for inſpection. In reference to this cuſtom (I ſuppoſe) the Lord God declares, in a way accommodated to human apprehenſion, that he hath inſcribed on the palms of his hands, which are continually in his view, the whole model according to which he builds and repairs Zion. According to this plan deviſed by infinite wiſdom, he adjuſts every circumſtance that relates to his church. This form he hath not merely pourtrayed, but engraven in indelible characters, intimating that nothing reſpecting this ſpiritual building ſhall be ever neglected or effaced from his remembrance. In the counſel and purpoſe of Jehovah in Chriſt Jeſus is formed the model, according to which the whole ſpiritual building is fitly framed together, that groweth into an holy temple in the Lord, and all its intereſts are conducted. The platform of the tabernacle, with all its parts, which of old repreſented the church under the New Teſtament, was given to Moſes, who was commanded to make all things according to the pattern ſhewed him in the mount. The pattern of the temple built for the ſervice of God, David king of Iſrael had by the Spirit, and the Lord made him to underſtand in writing by his hand upon him, the plan of all the works*. The type or figure of the church of God in the moſt glorious ſtate in the latter days, was exhibited in viſion

* See 1 Chron. xxviii. 12, 19.

ſion to the prophet Ezekiel, and afterward to the apoſtle John. In this ſpiritual city and temple called the New Jeruſalem, God himſelf reſides, and will dwell for ever; there he hath his throne, and manifeſts his glory; he contemplates with pleaſure the work of his own hands, and the various revolutions through which it paſſes to its final conſummation.

Thy walls are continually before me. By the walls of Jeruſalem the church of the living God, may be intended her citizens, who are ſpoken of by an apoſtle as lively ſtones built upon Jeſus Chriſt, the ſure foundation that God hath laid in Zion; and which are united together by the Holy Spirit, in the bond of love and peace. Or they may denote whatſoever conſtitutes their ſtrength and defence, protects them from the aſſaults of their enemies, and diſtinguiſhes them from the world around them. The exact ſtate of theſe walls, and all the circumſtances relative to their ſituation, are the objects of his minute inſpection, who will not ſuffer them to fall into ruin even in troublous times. The ſafety and comfort that walls are the means of conveying to the city around which they are placed, the Lord God will aſſuredly afford his people at all times. 'The ſalvation of the righteous is of the Lord; he 'is their ſtrength and ſhield; in time of trouble the 'Lord ſhall help and deliver them *.' His ſervants, therefore, ought to rely with unſuſpecting confidence on his grace and power, aſſured that in every ſituation they are encompaſſed with his favour, and ſafe under his protection who is the Almighty. This conſideration ought to adminiſter conſolation to them in all their fears and diſtreſſes.

17 Thy children ſhall make haſte; thy deſtroyers, and they that made thee waſte, ſhall go forth of thee.

The

* Pſal. xxxvii. 39.

The people of God are aſſured of the deſtruction of their external enemies, and of their deliverance from thoſe adverſaries which from among themſelves had moleſted and diſturbed them.—*Thy children*, or, as the Hebrew word ſignifies, *thy builders*, who are employed in rearing up the walls of Jeruſalem, and the cities of Zion, ſhall exert all their powers with alacrity and diligence, to advance your intereſts, and to increaſe your numbers. The children of Zion ſhall haſten with the utmoſt expedition to turn unto the Lord, and to accept of the offered grace of the Saviour. No action whatſoever is done with greater readineſs and chearfulneſs than this. After a man is fully convinced of the imminent danger of everlaſting deſtruction to which he is expoſed; after he is firmly perſuaded of the mercy that is in God, and the ſalvation that is in Chriſt Jeſus; he flies for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before him. Alarmed by a view of his perilous condition, and allured by the tender compaſſion of Jehovah, he haſtens with the utmoſt ſpeed to eſcape perdition, like a perſon that is ready to periſh by fire or water; he runs as one in a race to lay hold of the prize, he flies as did the man-ſlayer of old to the city of refuge.—Be perſuaded, then, my hearers, to unite in ſpeedily verifying this prediction, which was remarkably fulfilled to the primitive Chriſtian church, and which ſhall have a farther and more full accompliſhment. Take ſanctuary in the grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe arms are always open to receive into favour thoſe who, convinced of their ſin and danger, have recourſe to him for ſalvation.—To remove every obſtruction that might prevent the fulfilment of this prediction, the overthrow of thoſe who laid waſte the church is explicitly foretold.

Thy deſtroyers, and they that laid thee waſte, &c. Their internal enemies, that had inſinuated themſelves into their ſociety, were to leave them, or by various means to be expelled from among them. Of this

this ſort were falſe teachers, falſe brethren, deceitful workers, and Jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity, who maintained that they were ſtill obliged to obſerve the ritual part of the law of Moſes, and that the Gentile converts ought to be circumciſed, and to ſubmit to the ſame rites. Theſe, with others of whom the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks in his ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians, in his epiſtle to the Galatians, and in his letters to Timothy and Titus, were, I ſuppoſe, the deſtroyers here intended. Theſe were the grievous wolves that he cautioned the church of Epheſus to beware *, whoſe word did eat as doth a canker †, who overthrew the faith of ſome ‡, concerning whom he ſaith, I would that they were even cut off that trouble you ‖.—Men of theſe deſcriptions, who endeavoured to deſtroy and lay waſte the church of God, were to go forth from them, to renounce their intimate connection with the diſciples of the Son of God, and to remain no longer in communion with them. In the words of the apoſtle John, (1 Ep. ii. 19.) we ſay, 'They went out 'from us, but they were not of us; for if they had 'been of us, they would no doubt have continued 'with us; but they went out that they might be 'made manifeſt that they were not all of us.'—Take heed then, and beware of thoſe who are enemies to the croſs of Chriſt, who endeavour to undermine his doctrine, and oppoſe his grace and authority. Though born in the ſame country, and profeſſing to believe the ſame truths, they may try to ſeduce you from the faith of Chriſt, to injure your beſt intereſts, and to deſtroy your ſouls. Permit me alſo to caution you againſt thoſe internal enemies which you are in danger of cheriſhing in your own breaſts, pride, infidelity, hypocriſy, malice, impurity, falſehood, covetouſneſs, and other bad diſpoſitions.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all theſe gather themſelves together, *and*

* Acts xx. 29. † 2 Tim. ii. 17. ‡ Ver. 18. ‖ Gal. v. 12.

and come to thee, *as* I live, ſaith the LORD, thou ſhalt ſurely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them *on thee* as a bride *doeth*.

The dejected church of God as a ground of conſolation, are called to behold the large acceſſions which they were to receive from all quarters, and to attend to the certainty of this deſirable event.—The miniſtry of the word being accompanied with the demonſtration of the Spirit and with power; great numbers of people of every deſcription and of every nation were to reſort to their community, that they might be admitted to participate of their exalted privileges. Notwithſtanding every intervening obſtacle, they were to repair to the boſom of the church, that they might enjoy fellowſhip with Jeſus Chriſt and his faithful diſciples, with the precious bleſſings contained in his promiſes. Lift up your eyes, look round about, diligently conſider, and apply your minds to the contemplation of this glorious ſpectacle; the children of Zion of every kindred and language, haſting from the four winds of heaven, to Jeſus Chriſt, the centre of union and happineſs. What a grand ſcene! what a delightful proſpect opens to the view—a vaſt concourſe of converts flocking from every direction into the houſe of God, and joining themſelves to the Lord from whom by ſin they had been ſeparated, and to that bleſſed ſociety whereof he is the head, the felicity, and the glory. 'Sing and rejoice, O 'daughter of Zion, for lo—many nations ſhall be 'joined to the Lord in that day, and ſhall be my 'people, and I will dwell in the midſt of thee *.' How wonderful the efficacy of the word of God, which brings to paſs the moſt ſurpriſing glorious events, vanquiſhes the moſt powerful oppoſition, and brings ſtrangers, who were afar off from God, to be fellow

* Zech. ii. 10, 11.

fellow citizens with the ſaints, and members of the houſehold of faith!

As I live, ſaith the Lord, thou ſhalt ſurely clothe thee with them all, &c. To give the ſtrongeſt ſecurity for the accompliſhment of this prediction, Jehovah was pleaſed to ſuperadd his oath to his word, and to declare, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that as certainly as he poſſeſſes exiſtence, life, and omnipotence, this promiſed event ſhall be fulfilled in its ſeaſon. The form of ſwearing here uſed frequently occurs in the writings of Moſes and the prophets, eſpecially in the book of Ezekiel, where, if I miſtake not, it occurs fourteen times. It forcibly expreſſes the abſolute irrevocable purpoſe of the living God, to do as he hath ſaid, to ratify and eſtabliſh what he hath foretold, and to unite by an indiſſoluble connection his own life with the increaſe and advancement of his church, who ought therefore to be firmly perſuaded of his veracity.—*Thou ſhalt ſurely clothe thee*, &c. By the large acceſſion of converts which ſhall come to thee from all the regions of the earth, thou ſhalt be richly covered and adorned, ſo as to appear beautiful and lovely in the eyes of all who have ſpiritual diſcernment. As a bride dreſſes herſelf in the beſt apparel, and is decked with ornaments and jewels, to add to her comelineſs and elegance whatever may attract notice and admiration—ſo thou ſhalt be decorated, and thy ſplendor increaſed, by the doctrine and ſanctity, the gifts and graces, of many valuable illuſtrious perſons who ſhall be converted unto thee by divine grace. Men of diſtinguiſhed excellence and brilliant ſanctified abilities ſhall prove thy brighteſt ornaments, and being cloſely attached to thee by the ſtrong ties of affection, intereſt, and duty; and appropriated to thy ſervice and honour, thou ſhalt ſhine forth with amiable luſtre and glory, and acquire great renown and celebrity.—Animated by this ſolemn aſſurance, let us direct our fervent ſupplications to the only wiſe God our Saviour, that he would

would endow us with wiſdom and love to advance the intereſts of his kingdom. And let us unite our efforts to make known the glory of Jehovah, the perfection of his work, the wonders of his grace, and the bleſſings of his ſalvation, to our brethren of mankind.

19 For thy waſte and thy deſolate places, and the land of thy deſtruction, ſhall even now be too narrow by reaſon of the inhabitants, and they that ſwallowed thee up ſhall be far away.

Our Prophet proceeds to foretel the deſtruction of the external enemies of the church. Depreſſed by the oppoſition and perſecution which they ſuſtained in ſome periods, the ſervants of God might have ſaid, What avails the increaſe of our children and the enlargement of our community, if we are not delivered from the tyranny and oppreſſion of our adverſaries, who are ready to devour us, and to bereave us of our precious ſons and daughters? All neceſſary proviſion is made to remove the ground of this complaint. Though for wiſe important reaſons God permits his church to be laid waſte, he hath promiſed to give them ſupport and conſolation; and if they are anxious and troubled about their habitations, and the places wherein they convened to worſhip the God of their fathers, they are given to know, that thoſe houſes which have been demoliſhed and buried in ruins ſhall be rebuilt and enlarged, with greater magnificence and beauty than they formerly poſſeſſed—that their country which had been deſolated and deprived of its inhabitants by the fury of their oppreſſors, who were intent, if poſſible, on exterminating them from the face of the earth, was to prove incapable of containing them on account of their prodigious increaſe, whilſt their perſcutors were to be diſperſed and conſumed by one another.—The Roman empire, poſſeſſed

by Chriſtians deeply engaged in ſupporting the injured intereſts of their divine Maſter, which afterward became a deſolate country, is ſuppoſed by the learned Vitringa and other commentators to have been the land here ſpoken of. That region, though compriſing a vaſt extent of territory, was of too ſmall compaſs to contain the numerous diſciples of the Son of God, after the cruel perſecutions they ſuffered were over. So rapidly did they multiply, that the places of divine worſhip, and even the country they occupied, were not ſufficient to hold the immenſe numbers of Chriſtians added unto the church.—*And they that ſwallowed thee up ſhall be far away.* Such is the dreadful ferocity and ſavage cruelty of thoſe who perſecute the ſervants of God, that they ſeize upon them with the utmoſt rapacity, and like wild beaſts would utterly devour them, did not the Almighty mercifully interpoſe for their deliverance and preſervation. At the time to which this prediction refers, the implacable adverſaries of the followers of Jeſus Chriſt were to be removed at a great diſtance, and to be incapable of annoying them any longer as in times paſt.—This prophecy ſeems to refer to the perſecution that happened under Diocleſian the Roman emperor, who commanded the churches to be demoliſhed, the bibles to be burnt, the miniſters of the goſpel to be put in chains, the richer Chriſtians to be branded with infamy, and the vulgar of them to be made ſlaves *: And to the ſubſequent deliverance of the church, and the proſperity they afterward enjoyed.

20 The children which thou ſhalt have, after thou haſt loſt the other, ſhall ſay again in thine ears, The place is too ſtrait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

The Prophet amplifies and illuſtrates the ſubject, by

* Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. 8. chap. 2, 3, 12, 13.

by announcing the large increaſe of the church, after having ſuffered the moſt direful calamities.—The children ſpoken of, were the large acceſſions made to the ſociety of the faithful, during the time they had been diſperſed and remained in a deſtitute condition, reſembling that of a mother bereaved of her children. The church reduced to this deplorable ſtate, deprived of the children with which they had been formerly bleſſed, were to hear others ſaying *again in their ears*, &c. After the priſons were opened, after thoſe who had fled into deſarts and diſtant countries, returned to the places and churches from which they had eſcaped in perilous times, to elude the torments threatened by their perſecutors; and after liberty was granted to the public profeſſion of Chriſtianity, larger and more ſpacious places for ſacred worſhip became neceſſary, and ſpaces much more extenſive than thoſe formerly appropriated to their uſe, were to be allotted to the children of light. Chriſtians were then to ſay to the heathen around them, *Give place to me that I may dwell*; permit me to enlarge my territories, and to occupy more extenſive poſſeſſions, and more commodious habitations than thoſe I have enjoyed in times paſt. This reaſonable requeſt affords a ſtriking proof of the great increaſe of the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, and of the flouriſhing condition to which they were to be advanced, after having ſuſtained many grievous afflictions.

21 Then ſhalt thou ſay in thine heart, Who hath begotten me theſe, ſeeing I have loſt my children, and am deſolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up theſe? behold, I was left alone: theſe, where *have* they *been*?

The church expreſſes their agreeable ſurpriſe, at the unexpected appearance of numerous converts, that

that had been made to the faith and obedience of the Son of God, during their deſolation and diſperſion. There is probably an alluſion to ſome great city, which in time of war had been deprived of moſt of her beſt citizens; who after the calamities of war ceaſed, returns to her former ſtate of tranquillity and proſperity, and ſees her ſcattered citizens coming home in great numbers, with immenſe affluence and a numerous offſpring. In like manner, after the violent ſtorm of perſecution had ſubſided, the confeſſors of the name of Chriſt that had been driven away from their habitations, who ſtill ſurvived and were reſtored to liberty, could not view the increaſe of their numbers and their proſperous ſtate, without expreſſing ſurpriſe and admiration—*Who hath begotten me theſe?* From whence come this beautiful numerous offspring, and by what means were they brought into the family of God?—*Seeing I have loſt my children*, by the cruelty and fury of oppreſſors: And am deſolate in a deſtitute forlorn and helpleſs condition—*A captive*, driven from my native country, diſtreſſed and inſlaved by tyrannical oppreſſors—*And removing to and fro*, in a ſtate of continual uncertainty, ſhifting from one place to another, in order to elude the rage of unrelenting perſecutors.—*And who hath brought theſe up?* who cheriſhed, inſtructed, and provided for theſe hopeful children that have been added unto the Lord?—*Behold I was left alone*, and abandoned by many of my profeſſed friends, compelled to flee into ſolitude, deſtitute of companions to take care of me, and to give me hope of children.—Though the Lord God permits his church to continue for a ſeaſon in deplorable circumſtances, it is comfortable to reflect that their deſolations are not perpetual; that in mercy he will repair the breaches made upon them, and build up the walls thereof even in troublous times. By accompanying his word with divine power, by the invincible conſtancy of his martyrs, by the wonderful deliverance of his ſervants

vants from their perſecutors, by their holy lives, and the remarkable deſtruction of their adverſaries; God is pleaſed to multiply and bring up his children, and to give ſatisfying anſwers to the queſtions propoſed in this verſe. The ſpread and ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the virulent oppoſition raiſed againſt it by earthly rulers, is its peculiar glory; and demonſtrates that Almighty God is its author and protector.—This prediction ſeems to have a ſpecial reference to the time of Conſtantine, the firſt Chriſtian emperor, when the church of Chriſt was greatly increaſed and enlarged. That illuſtrious prince treated Chriſtian Biſhops with much reſpect; he exhorted his ſubjects to embrace Chriſtianity; he required them to obſerve the Lord's day; he advanced Chriſtians to places of truſt and power; he built many magnificent churches and oratories; and by theſe means aſſiſted in bringing up the children here mentioned *.

22 Thus ſaith the LORD God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and ſet up my ſtandard to the people: and they ſhall bring thy ſons in *their* arms, and thy daughters ſhall be carried upon *their* ſhoulders.

Our Prophet having foretold the rapid increaſe of the diſciples of the Son of God, and the overthrow of thoſe tyrants, who by horrid perſecutions retarded the progreſs of the church of God; proceeds to repreſent their ſubſequent proſperity and glory, in conſequence of the vaſt multitudes from among the Gentile nations that were to join them, and give them their ſupport. This momentous ſubject which might ſeem to exceed human expectation, he introduces with his accuſtomed ſolemnity.

* Moſheim's Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. 1. p. 261, *et ſeq.* Millar's Hiſtory of Chriſtianity, vol. 1. p. 580.

ty.—*Thus ſaith the Lord God*, whoſe word ſhall certainly receive its exact accompliſhment in due ſeaſon, and who by fulfilling this prophecy, will demonſtrate that he is Jehovah who ruleth over all, who is ever faithful in verifying his promiſes.—*I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles*, &c. Though lifting up the hand is mentioned in ſcripture to ſignify the ſolemn act of ſwearing, (Deut. xxxii. 40.) bleſſing with authority, (Luke xxiv. 50.) and threatening or ſmiting, (Ezek. xliv. 12.) I ſuppoſe, from what immediately follows, that it is not uſed here in any of theſe ſenſes. This poſture is deſigned to intimate, that the Almighty, by the diſpenſations of his providence, and the miniſtry of the goſpel, accompanied with divine power, was to give certain ſignals of his pleaſure to neighbouring nations, which they were to obey.—*And ſet up my ſtandard*, &c. or banner of the croſs, to which the people ſhall be invited to reſort by the edicts of princes, and the miniſtry of my ſervants, from the moſt remote regions of the earth, that they may participate in the bleſſings of my kingdom, and yield ſubjection to my authority.—*And they ſhall bring thy ſons in their arms*, &c. Theſe words are not to be literally, but figuratively underſtood. They evidently refer to the tender ſolicitude with which young creatures are cheriſhed and carried by perſons entruſted with the care of them. In this ſymbolical language, the church of Jeſus Chriſt is to be conſidered as the mother who was to treat young converts to the Chriſtian faith with the greateſt gentleneſs, to cheriſh them with kind affection, and chearfully to afford them every aſſiſtance that they needed, when enfeebled and dejected. According to this prediction, the ſtronger and more aged Chriſtians were to aſſiſt the younger and weaker, and in love to ſerve one another. By bearing one anothers burdens, they were to fulfil the law of Chriſt; that command which is peculiarly his, the diſtinguiſhing badge of his followers, whereby they are known

known from other men. The ties of humanity, connection, and friendſhip may be diſſolved; but the law of our Lord and Saviour brings every Chriſtian under the ſtrongeſt and moſt indiſſoluble obligations, to look not only on his own things, but on the things of others; to ſeek not only his own but another's wealth and proſperity.

23 And kings ſhall be thy nurſing fathers, and their queens thy nurſing mothers: they ſhall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the duſt of thy feet; and thou ſhalt know that I *am* the LORD; for they ſhall not be aſhamed that wait for me.

Another peculiar privilege is ſpecified to be enjoyed by the church of Jeſus Chriſt. They were to acquire new celebrity and glory from the foſtering protecting hand of perſons of the higheſt rank, inveſted with ſupreme authority, who would devoutly and publicly profeſs Chriſtianity, and ſupport its ſacred intereſts. The prediction elegantly expreſſes the external ſafety and felicity to be conferred on the ſervants of the Son of God.—Great perſonages of both ſexes, elevated to thrones and ſceptres, and clothed with royal majeſty, ſhall manifeſt tender ſolicitude for advancing the intereſts of the church of God, to which they ſhall give their powerful aid. They ſhall do what is competent for them to defend the people of God from the aſſaults of thoſe who would injure them, and to have them well inſtructed in the principles and duties inculcated in the goſpel; that through the divine bleſſing, they may be nouriſhed up by good miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt in the words of faith and good doctrine. They ſhall take care that the word of God be read, explained, and recommended to the people; that the nature of divine inſtitutions be expounded, and the practice of Chriſtian duties be enforced,

enforced, as the beſt means of furniſhing them for every good work. Theſe, and ſimilar kind offices, ſhall the kings and queens of the earth perform, that they may prove nurſing fathers and mothers to the church of God.

They ſhall bow down to thee, &c. This was the cuſtom in ancient times of expreſſing reverence for perſons of diſtinguiſhed eminence, and of ſhewing reſpect for thoſe that were highly eſteemed. When Joſeph's brethren came into his preſence, after he was appointed governor of all the land of Egypt, 'they 'bowed themſelves with their faces to the earth *.' In alluſion to this practice, Iſaiah foretels, that princes, with other illuſtrious perſonages, accuſtomed to receive the homage of thoſe about them, ſhall teſtify profound reſpect for the church of Jeſus Chriſt. They ſhall readily manifeſt their ſincere regard for the diſciples of our Lord, and their firm attachment to their intereſts, in thoſe various ways whereby they may ſhew their eſteem and veneration of their character and privileges; particularly by uniting with them in the adoration and worſhip of our common Lord and Saviour.—The following words, taken from the manners of eaſtern countries, ſtill more ſtrongly expreſs profound reverence and ſubmiſſion to the community of the faithful—*And lick up the duſt of thy feet.* Such ſplendid language as this, which evidently refers to the extravagant homage paid to eaſtern monarchs, was, I ſuppoſe, intended only as an amplification of the ſubject, not as a prediction to be literally underſtood and fulfilled preciſely according to the letter. The expreſſions, however, taken in connection with others of a ſimilar nature, contain ſufficient ground of gratitude and praiſe to the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh, who hath elſewhere foretold, that 'all kings ſhall fall 'down before Jeſus Chriſt, and that all nations ſhall 'ſerve him †.'

And thou ſhalt know that I am the Lord. By the accompliſhment

* Gen. xlii. 6. † Pſal. lxxii. 11.

accompliſhment of theſe precious promiſes, which ſurpaſſes all human expectation, the ſervants of the Moſt High ſhall be fully ſatisfied, that the God in whom they truſt is indeed Jehovah, whoſe righteouſneſs and grace, whoſe power and faithfulneſs, are thereby richly diſplayed, whilſt their happineſs is greatly advanced. Thou ſhalt acknowledge that I am Jehovah, by loving, honouring, and ſerving me, and by making known my infinite majeſty, excellence, and glory; that my name and ſalvation may be celebrated with admiration and gratitude throughout the earth.—*For they ſhall not be aſhamed that wait for me.* Thoſe who in the exerciſe of faith, and hope, and patience wait upon God for the interpoſitions of his providence, and the fulfilment of his promiſes, ſhall never be confounded. Though ſometimes they may be diſappointed of the aſſiſtance, protection, and deliverance they looked for, at the time they wiſhed to enjoy them, yet all their expectations founded on the promiſes of God ſhall ultimately be more than gratified. They ſhall not be aſhamed of their hope, of the foundation whereon it reſts, or of the objects on which it terminates. Jehovah will not alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth, nor will he fruſtrate thoſe longing deſires that he himſelf hath excited. His infinite goodneſs, wiſdom, veracity, and power, give the ſtrongeſt ſecurity that his promiſes ſhall not fail of their accompliſhment.

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

An objection is ſtarted to the fulfilment of the above predictions, derived from the powerful oppoſition made by formidable enemies to the proſperity of the kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt. The difficulty, whether propoſed by our Prophet in his own name, or in the name of the church, is compoſed of two parts, which, being of ſimilar import, may be conſidered together.

gether. The event, reſpecting which enquiry is made, though not impoſſible, is very improbable, and extremely difficult to be effected. If a mighty man hath got poſſeſſion of ſome valuable booty, it cannot be ſuppoſed that he will part with it unleſs he be vanquiſhed, and it be taken from him by force. —The prey may denote the Gentile nations, which had long been detained by the powers of darkneſs in ignorance and error, in ſuperſtition and idolatry, from among whom our Prophet had foretold large acceſſions were to be made to the kingdom of the Son of God: Or it may ſignify the church of Chriſt, which had been ſpoiled by their powerful perſecutors, who had reduced them into their ſubjection; who had vexed, oppreſſed, and almoſt cut them off. In either of theſe ſenſes doth it ſeem likely that the prey ſhall be taken from the mighty.—*Or the lawful captive delivered?* The late biſhop of London hath better tranſlated this latter clauſe of the verſe thus, 'Or ſhall the prey ſeized by the ter-'rible be reſcued?' On the margin of ſome bibles the Hebrew words are rendered, 'Shall the captivi-'ty of the juſt be delivered?' by which I ſuppoſe is meant the ſame as the prey; thoſe who eſpecially belonged to the Holy and Juſt One, who were choſen by him for his peculiar people, and yet remained in the bondage of corruption, captives to their ſpiritual enemies: Or thoſe ſubjects of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt who were expoſed to the terrible tortures inflicted upon them by their cruel unrelenting oppreſſors, and detained by them in miſerable circumſtances.

Theſe few remarks ſhew the import of the queſtions under conſideration. Shall the prey be taken away and reſcued on which the ſtrong hath laid hold, which he guards with the utmoſt attention and vigilance? Shall theſe captives be delivered, not only from the rapacity of their foes, but be brought in ſafety to a happy and comfortable condition? Yes, my brethren. The Son of God, who

deſcended

deſcended to this earth, hath aſcended on high, and led captivity captive; he completely vanquiſhed all the enemies of his church, and ſtands engaged that none of his people ſhall be deſtroyed by any adverſe power. 'Truſt then in him at all 'times, ye people; pour out your hearts before 'him; God is a refuge for us *.'

25 But thus ſaith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty ſhall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible ſhall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will ſave thy children.

The difficulty propoſed in the former verſe is reſolved by Jehovah himſelf, who executeth judgment for the oppreſſed, and looſeth the priſoners.—*Even the captives of the mighty*, &c. Thoſe who have been kept in bondage by their ſpiritual enemies ſhall be ſet at liberty, the deluded ſubjects of the kingdom of darkneſs ſhall be ſnatched from the power of their adverſaries, as brands from the fire, and ſhall be introduced into the houſehold of faith. —*And the prey of the terrible ſhall be delivered*, &c. The people of God, who have been haraſſed and perſecuted by thoſe who appear terrible, on account of the cruelty by which they are actuated, and the power with which they are armed, ſhall in due time be vindicated from their tyranny, by him who redeems his ſervants from the hands of their foes. Of this comfortable truth the moſt illuſtrious inſtances are recorded in ſcripture. After the Jewiſh people had become a prey to the mighty power of the Chaldeans, and had been led captive by Nebuchadnezzar, the Lord God was graciouſly pleaſed to ſet them at liberty, and to reſtore them to their own land. When the fulneſs of time arrived, the Son of

* Pſal. lxii. 8.

of God, who came forth conquering and to conquer, vanquiſhed principalities and powers, deſtroyed death, led captivity captive, and took out from among the Gentiles a people for his name. And in the day of his power he triumphs over his own and his people's enemies, and takes the prey from the mighty. In this manner hath the truth before us been verified in manifold inſtances; and in ſubſequent periods it ſhall certainly be farther confirmed by the happy experience of the church of God.

For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, &c. The diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt ſtrive with many ſtrong adverſe powers which they are unable to vanquiſh, and were they to combat with them in their own ſtrength, they would ſoon fall a prey into their hands. Diffident, however, of their own abilities, and animated by the reviving aſſurance, that Jehovah contends with thoſe that fight with them, that their enemies are his foes, over whom he will certainly triumph, they ſuſtain the conflict without being intimidated, or anxious about the conſequences, as it is eaſy to ſee how the conteſt muſt terminate. Almighty God ſhall undoubtedly appear in their behalf, and vindicate the injured rights of his perſecuted church, as foretold by the prophet David, Pſal. xxxv. 1, 2. 'Plead, O 'Lord, with them that ſtrive with me, fight againſt 'them that fight againſt me. Take hold of ſhield 'and buckler, and ſtand up for my help.' The Lord God will not permit either internal or external foes to maintain uſurped dominion over thoſe who have inliſted under the banner of his Son. He will ſhortly give them victory over the allurements and terrors of the world, he will bruiſe Satan under their feet, he will enable them to triumph over death and the grave, and reſcue their ſouls from deſtruction.—*And I will ſave thy children.* The children of Zion, who are weak, timid, and helpleſs, and expoſed to many dangers, greatly need protection

protection and defence. The Lord God Almighty, therefore, graciouſly promiſes, that he will deliver them from the innumerable evils with which they are environed; that they ſhall dwell in ſafety under his ſhadow; and that they ſhall be ſaved in the Lord with an everlaſting ſalvation.—Juſtly, then, may the upright among men adopt the words of a ſong of thankſgiving for deliverance, ſaying, 'Gracious 'is our Lord and righteous, yea, our God is merci-'ful. The Lord preſerveth the ſimple; I was 'brought low, and he helped me.'

26 And I will feed them that oppreſs thee with their own fleſh, and they ſhall be drunken with their own blood, as with ſweet wine: and all fleſh ſhall know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

The reply made to the difficulty urged in ver. 24. is continued in this verſe. The words contain a ſtrong figurative deſcription of the internal contentions and wars, with their fatal conſequences, which were to ariſe among the enemies of the church, who ſhould prove inſtrumental in accompliſhing each others deſtruction. The ſword is ſaid to devour fleſh, and to be drunk with the blood of the ſlain, (Deut. xxxii. 42.), when it cuts the fleſh and ſheds the blood of great multitudes. The expreſſion under conſideration is of ſimilar import, and muſt be underſtood in the ſame manner. Thoſe who afflicted and oppreſſed the people of God, inſtigated by pride, envy, hatred, or deſire of revenge, were to become hoſtile to one another, and having made terrible ſlaughter among thoſe with whom they contended, they were to be ſatiated with each others fleſh, and intoxicated with each others blood—*As with ſweet wine*, which, though pleaſant

pleaſant to the taſte, when taken in large quantities deprives of the uſe of reaſon, and brings on many diſtreſſes of various kinds. Thus it was to happen to the adverſaries of the church of Chriſt, who, influenced by vindictive turbulent diſpoſitions, were employed in fighting one with another to gratify their malevolent paſſions. Their feuds and quarrels were to be attended with dreadful fatal conſequences, which were to terminate in their utter deſtruction. Thoſe who hardly united in any thing but in the execrable deſign of diſtreſſing and vexing the ſervants of God, having turned every man his ſword againſt his fellow, were to be glutted with carnage and bloodſhed. Every one was to drink, as it were, the blood of his fellow citizens.—According to this prediction, divine vengeance quickly ſeized on many governors of the Roman empire who were violent perſecutors of the Chriſtian church, eſpecially at the period to which our Prophet ſeems to refer *. Contemplating this affecting ſcene, we ſay, with the angel of the waters, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, '—for they have ſhed the blood of ſaints and pro-'phets, and thou haſt given them blood to drink, 'for they are worthy,' Rev. xvi. 5, 6. We celebrate the righteous judgments of God, which are exactly proportioned to the crimes they are intended to puniſh; for no procedure can be more equitable and juſt, than that thoſe who have ſhed the blood of the ſaints ſhould be puniſhed by the effuſion of their own blood.

And all fleſh ſhall know, &c. The Lord is known by the judgment that he executeth, his omnipotence, righteouſneſs, and dominion, are thereby glorioufly manifeſted. He is acknowledged to be the avenger of the wrongs done to his people, and the mighty One who delivers them from all their diſtreſſes, and from the hands of all their enemies, who

* See Miller's Hiſt. of the Propagation of Chriſtianity, Vol. I. p. 566.

who faithfully accompliſhes both his promiſes and threatenings by mercies and judgments. 'Salvation, 'and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord 'our God, for true and righteous are his judgments. 'The righteous ſhall rejoice when he ſeeth the ven-'geance, and a man ſhall ſay, verily, there is a re-'ward for the righteous, verily he is a God that judg-'eth in the earth,' Pſal. lviii. 10, 11.

PRELI-

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE firſt ſection of the ſecond diſcourſe, contained in the fifth part of theſe prophecies is next to be conſidered.—The chapter before us may be diſtributed into two parts. In the former, the Lord God points out the cauſe of the dereliction of the Jewiſh people, which at the time referred to, were reduced to an afflicted deplorable ſtate. After having been intimately connected with them for a long period as their huſband and Lord, he publicly divorced them, and delivered them into the power of their enemies; not thro' any change in his mind, who is without ſhadow of turning, but on account of their enormous tranſgreſſions, eſpecially for the contempt they offered to his ſalvation; whoſe power and grandeur is repreſented in very ſublime language, ver. 1, 2, 3.—In the latter part of the chapter an illuſtrious perſonage, a great prophet or teacher is introduced, declaring that he was fully authoriſed and qualified to offer ſalvation to the Jewiſh people, from whom he received the greateſt injuries, and the moſt virulent reproaches which he patiently ſuſtained; firmly perſuaded that the Lord God would reſcue him from the hands of his enemies, who were to be aſhamed and conſumed, ver. 4—9.—After which, turning to his genuine diſciples who feared the Lord and obeyed his voice; he comforts their diſconſolate minds; he foretels the certain deſtruction of the hypocritical and profane, plainly intimating, that they who walked in their own ways, ſhould periſh in their own counſels, ver. 10, 11.

CHAP.

CHAP. L.

THUS ſaith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is *it* to whom I have ſold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye ſold yourſelves, and for your tranſgreſſions is your mother put away.

The Lord God peremptorily refuſes that he had divorced and ſold the Jewiſh people, on account of any change on his part, and explicitly affirms that they had departed from him, and conſequently were the cauſes of their rejection and ſervitude. The ſubject is introduced with our Prophet's accuſtomed ſolemnity, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, the Almighty ſovereign of heaven and earth, who vouchſafes to vindicate his conduct toward his peculiar people, and to evince the rectitude of his diſpenſations. The nation of the Jews were doubtleſs the mother that was put away, and the children that were ſold; one generation after another having treacherouſly departed from the Moſt High. They were corrupt diſobedient children, who did not honour God as their Father; and therefore they were expelled from the land of Canaan, from the city, the temple, and the ſervice of Jehovah; from thoſe places wherein God was ſaid ſo reſide in a peculiar manner, and to manifeſt his grace and glory to his people. He therefore declares in this public manner, that he had not caſt them off until they had rejected him, and by this deteſtible conduct obliged him in juſtice to deprive them of the privileges they had enjoyed. They had gone away from God and ſold themſelves, ſo that he juſtly declaims every ground of the charge they brought againſt him, of having in the firſt inſtance put them away.

The Lord had been graciouſly pleaſed to admit the poſterity of Iſrael into a conjugal relation to himſelf, inſomuch that they and their land were ſaid to be married unto him. In this intimate connection, he always acted toward them with tender affection; he delighted in them, and rejoiced over them to do them good. Their infidelity and undutiful behaviour juſtly provoked him, (after having borne long with their evil manners,) to abandon them, and to deny them that aſſiſtance, care, and protection, which they were no more to enjoy, until by ſevere calamities they were brought to repent of their ſin and folly. Notwithſtanding, in the words of an apoſtle, God hath among them a remnant according to the election of grace.—To remove every doubt that might ariſe on this ſubject, it is plainly aſſerted that though the Lord God had not diſpoſed of them to any of thoſe indebted to him, for all that they enjoyed,

Behold for your iniquities have you ſold yourſelves, &c. On account of your criminal attachment to your tranſgreſſions, and for the ſake of indulging in ſin, you have delivered up yourſelves into the power of cruel oppreſſors, who grievouſly afflicted and tyrannized over you. Beſides you have forfeited thoſe manifold ineſtimable privileges, wherewith you have long been favoured. What perfidy, what ingratitude, what diſobedience, did they manifeſt in forſaking the rock of their ſalvation, the fountain of living water, and in hewing out broken ciſterns that could hold no water!—This heavy charge brought againſt the men of Judah, was remarkably verified at the time wherein the Son of God appeared in human nature, as we learn from the Goſpels and the Acts of the Apoſtles. A few excepted, who waited for the conſolation of Iſrael; the moſt odious corruption in principles and practices prevailed among all ranks of the people. Many of them having renounced the hope of a better life, embraced the abominable doctrine of the Sadducees, great part

part of them adopted the tenets of the Phariſees, who having imbibed ſtrong prejudices againſt the way of ſalvation, ſought to attain to righteouſneſs by the works of the law. Vaſt numbers conformed to the practices of the heathen, among whom they lived. From theſe errors and vices, they would not be reſtrained by the preaching of John the Baptiſt, by the miniſtry of our bleſſed Saviour and his apoſtles; but obſtinately perſiſting in all kinds of impiety and wickedneſs, they rejected with diſdain the ſalvation offered to them, and ſo became a prey to the Romans, who executed upon them the righteous judgments of God.

Imagine not that this conduct was peculiar to the inhabitants of Judah. Have not we, brethren, as they did, ſold ourſelves for our iniquities, and yielded ourſelves ſervants of ſin? Enquire what valuable returns you have got from this ſale, what recompenſe you have received for this ſervice? Doth it fully anſwer your expectation, or is it a fruitleſs enterpriſe accompanied with ſhame and remorſe? Doth the profit more than counterbalance the loſſes you have ſuſtained? Doth the pleaſure more than compenſate the uneaſineſſes you have felt. Say what doth it? Have you gained, or have you loſt? Have you not got a bad conſcience and a diſtempered conſtitution; have you not forfeited reputation and incurred diſgrace? Are not all your poſſeſſions incumbered by anxiety and vexation of ſpirit; are not all your beſt hopes fruſtrated and diſappointed? Do you ſay, What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him; and what profit is there in keeping his ordinances? I ſay, what is ſin that you ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof? what fruit had ye then in thoſe things whereof you are aſhamed? for the end of thoſe things is death. Commune with your own hearts reſpecting the advantages you imagine you have gained, by giving up yourſelves to the practice of tranſgreſſion; and may it pleaſe God to diſcover the criminality and danger

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ger of ſuch conduct, and diſpoſe you to yield yourſelves unto him, as thoſe who are alive from the dead.

2 Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to anſwer? is my hand ſhortened at all that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the ſea, I make the rivers a wilderneſs: their fiſh ſtinketh, becauſe *there is* no water, and dieth for thirſt.

The Son of God, the great Prophet of the Lord, gives a circumſtantial deſcription of his appearance among the Jews which perfectly accords with the event as recorded by the Evangeliſts. This is accompanied with a magnificent repreſentation of his infinite power and grandeur. This illuſtrious Teacher came unto his own, and his own received him not. He taught as one having authority, in the temple, in the ſynagogues, and in the fields; he called his hearers to repentance from dead works, and to faith in his goſpel; he proffered to them righteouſneſs, liberty, and ſalvation, with every precious bleſſing. He frequently and affectionately invited them to come and participate of the ineſtimable benefits he offered freely to beſtow. Recollecting the infinite dignity of his perſon, the tender compaſſion with which he addreſſed the people, the miſery from which he called them, the honour and happineſs he exhibited to their acceptance, the powerful motives by which he entreated, and the manifold obligations they were under to obey his voice, it might have been expected that all without exception would have complied with his ſolicitations. But, alas! what were the conſequences of his aſtoniſhing grace? His miniſtry was indeed attended by multitudes, he had many admirers, but few genuine diſciples, who perceived

perceived his excellence; few who cordially embraced his doctrine, and followed his example. Tho' among the chief rulers ſome believed, they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould have been put out of the ſynagogue. There was hardly a man of reſpectability and dignity in the Jewiſh nation that received and countenanced the benevolent Inſtructor and Saviour of mankind. What indelible diſgrace and everlaſting reproach to the inhabitants of Judea, that after having expected for ages the Deſire of all nations, who was to viſit and redeem his people, none of the great men among them came to welcome his appearance; and inſtead of paying homage to this Prince of peace, they unjuſtly condemned him in the great counſel of the nation! Of all the iniquities to which they were ſold this was the moſt atrocious, and the chief cauſe of the miſerable deſolation of their temple, city, and country.—And now, my brethren, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath called us to repentance by his word and ſervants, and graciouſly offered his ſalvation to our acceptance, hath he not met with a ſimilar reception? What ingratitude to the bleſſed Redeemer, what inſolent contempt of his wonderful condeſcenſion and kindneſs! Perſiſt not in this diſreſpectful conduct to the Son of God, but hearken without delay to his alluring voice; accept of his gracious offers, give him the chief room in your hearts, and yield to him the obedience of your lives.

Is my hand ſhortened at all that it cannot redeem, &c. To remove every ſuſpicion that might ariſe reſpecting the ability of this glorious perſon, to accompliſh the ſalvation of thoſe who comply with his kind invitations, two queſtions are aſked; proper replies to which ought to diſpel every remaining doubt of his power.—*Is my hand ſhortened* that ſtretched out the heavens? Is my power diminiſhed or impaired, that laid the foundation of the earth? Is there any failure or deficiency in my omnipotence, who made and upholdeth all things,

and

and for whom all things are poſſible? Can you imagine that I the everlaſting God, the Lord who in time paſt wrought with a ſtrong hand and mighty arm, ſuch glorious deliverances for my people, am now become faint, and that my ſtrength is exhauſted? Are you ſo fooliſh and perverſe as to think, that I who am the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever, cannot vindicate you from ſervitude and captivity? that I cannot give a ſufficient ranſom for your redemption, or that I am unable to reſcue you from the hands of your enemies, when the glory of Jehovah ſhall be thereby moſt eminently diſplayed?—*Or have I no power to deliver* from thraldom, and to ſet at liberty from the tyranny of the moſt deſpotic potent oppreſſors, thoſe who have been detained in hard bondage? Look into the hiſtory of paſt ages, and ſee what multitudes I have delivered from death and deſtruction; and be aſſured that the glorious power then diſplayed remains unchangeably the ſame; and that I am as able now as in any former period, to ſave unto the uttermoſt. Conſider that I have received commiſſion from the Lord God to accompliſh the arduous work of redemption, that I am perfectly qualified for executing it; that I have given many illuſtrious inſtances of my ſaving power, and that I myſelf change not—and you muſt acknowledge, that my ability to ſave is unimpaired.

Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the ſea, &c. How magnificent the deſcription which the Redeemer of the church here gives of himſelf, to inſpire with hope and confidence in his everlaſting grace and power. There is a manifeſt reference in theſe expreſſions to two of the ſtupendous miracles which were wrought for Iſrael of old, when God brought them forth with a ſtrong hand from the land of Egypt. Then the waters of the Red Sea were divided and dried up at the divine command, to open a way for them to eſcape from the hands of their oppreſſors; and afterward the waters of the river Jordan

Jordan were alſo dried up, to give them a ſafe paſſage into the promiſed land of reſt, which they were to receive for inheritance. I divided the ſea and the rivers, to work deliverance for your fathers, and now I can as eaſily perform theſe or greater wonders to effect your ſafety and comfort. I can at once remove every obſtacle that lies in your way, however great and inſurmountable it may appear in your eyes. By theſe aſtoniſhing interpoſitions of the mercy and omnipotence of Jehovah, his ſervants are encouraged to place their truſt in him in whom there is everlaſting ſtrength.—The natural conſequence of the ſea and the rivers having been dried up is mentioned in theſe words, which require no comment. *Their fiſh dieth for thirſt, becauſe there is no water.*—As nothing is too hard for God our Saviour to accompliſh, and as no adverſe power can ſtop his operations; let us frequently contemplate the proofs of his omnipotence, that being firmly eſtabliſhed in the belief of his invincible power, our hope in them may be animated, and our activity in his ſervice may be increaſed.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackneſs, and I make ſackcloth their covering.

Another inſtance of the infinite majeſty and glory of the great Redeemer is here ſpecified. Thus ſaith the Lord, I cover the ſky from time to time with thoſe dark clouds which prevent the beauty and ſplendor of the celeſtial luminaries from being ſeen by the inhabitants of the earth. I clothe the firmament with that obſcurity whereby it is ſuddenly overſpread, when the ſtormy tempeſt ariſes; and which at other times proceeds from eclipſes of the ſun and moon.—The blackneſs and darkneſs which prevail in ſuch ſeaſons are repreſented by ſackcloth, which was worn by perſons in ancient times, as an evidence of their humiliation and ſorrow.—If you conſider the words before us in their myſtical

myſtical ſenſe, you may obſerve farther proof of the univerſal empire and uncontrollable power of the Meſſiah. He preſides over the awful civil commotions and terrible ſtorms with which the ſaints of the Moſt High have been aſſaulted, and that have involved them in perplexity and diſtreſs. Having brought them into ſtraits and difficulties which aſſume the moſt frowning aſpect; with the utmoſt eaſe he diſpels their fears, and reſtores them to a ſtate of tranquillity and comfort.—Often hath the political horizon ſeemed obſcure; often hath light been turned into darkneſs, accompanied with diſtreſs of nations. The heavens lowred and were clothed with blackneſs, when the Babylonian empire was overthrown—when the Egyptians were given into the hands of the Medes and Perſians—and again when the flouriſhing kingdom of Syria, (having deſigned to exterminate the worſhippers of the true God,) was deſtroyed by the mighty One, who claims as his glorious prerogative, the covering of the heavens with blackneſs—In theſe auguſt terms doth God our Saviour aſſert his ſupreme dominion; and thus doth he demonſtrate his power and glory by the deliverances he had wrought for his people, and the calamities he had inflicted on their enemies.—Who then that believes in the providence and record of God, is not fully perſuaded of the all-ſufficiency of the Saviour of the church, who avenges the wrongs done to them by their adverſaries? Who is not convinced of his conſummate ability to preſerve in ſafety thoſe who put their truſt in him? While the contemplation of the glorious Redeemer's power ſhould adminiſter conſolation to his people; it ought to ſtrike with awe and dread, the ungodly and the wicked. Were power lodged in our hands, we might ſoon hurt ourſelves, and employ it to bad purpoſes; but in his hands it is always under the conduct of infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and righteouſneſs;

teouſneſs, and is ever exerted for accompliſhing the beſt purpoſes.

4 The LORD God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to *him that* is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

After the Meſſiah had been exhibited in the preceding diſcourſe labouring in vain, and ſpending his ſtrength for nought among the Jews, deſpiſed of men, and abhorred by the nations, when actually employed in his public miniſtry; it became neceſſary to explain this ſurpriſing phenomenon. It is therefore affirmed that the neglect and contempt which he ſuffered, was not owing to any deficiency on the part of this celebrated teacher, who was eminently qualified for acquainting men with the will of God; in the knowledge of which he was perfectly inſtructed. This important qualification was not imparted to him by any human teacher, neither did he acquire it in the ſchools of philoſophers and orators, nor was it communicated to him by the moſt eminent of the prophets, but by the Spirit of the Lord God, to whom it is here attributed. He furniſhed him with ability to ſpeak with eaſe and perſpicuity, on the various ſubjects of which he had occaſion to diſcourſe, ſo as to convey in the moſt proper manner information, edification, and conſolation to his hearers. This precious gift was conferred in a ſuperlative degree on Jeſus Chriſt the great Prophet of the Lord, and the inſtructor of the church, who infinitely excelled all the other ſervants of God, in wiſdom, eloquence, and authority. Endowed with extraordinary diſcernment, prudence, and diſcretion; he accommodated his inſtructions to the various conditions of mankind;

he embraced the moſt proper opportunities of delivering them, and in the moſt attractive forms communicated them to his audience.

That I ſhould know, &c. Jeſus Chriſt was to addreſs with peculiar ſkill and happy effect, the weary who are grieved in their minds, whoſe ſtrength is exhauſted by the troubles they have ſuſtained, and who oppreſſed with the burden of iniquity, are longing for deliverance and conſolation. Perſons of this deſcription, who of all others moſt need encouragement and comfort, were the eſpecial objects of our Redeemer's condeſcending regard, and to them he ſometimes particularly addreſſed his diſcourſe. Among the many valuable gifts and qualifications which the Meſſiah was to poſſeſs, this is one of the moſt excellent, that having perfect acquaintance with the ſtate of people's minds, and able to give efficacy to the words of his mouth; he could ſo adapt his diſcourſe to their particular ſituations, as to afford relief to the feeble and dejected. He can ſo ſpeak to their hearts as to alleviate their burdens, diſpel their griefs, and prevent them from falling into deſpondency under a ſenſe of guilt. When his word comes with power, majeſty, and authority, and penetrates the heart; he baniſhes their ſorrows, he diſſipates their fears, he reſtores ſtrength to their ſouls, he revives their hopes, and grants them ſacred liberty peace and joy.—May He, who is mighty in word and in deed, ſo invigorate all our faculties, that under the preſſure of affliction we may neither deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him; and thus happily eſcape the dangerous rocks of preſumption and deſpair. And as the gifts of knowledge, wiſdom, and ſpiritual diſcernment, poſſeſſed by Jeſus Chriſt, flow down from the head to the members of his body the church; let us be ſolicitous in our meaſure to poſſeſs thoſe qualifications wherewith he was richly adorned; that in this as in other inſtances, we may imitate his amiable example. Em-

ployment

ployment of this ſort is a valuable gift; ſervice is real preferment, and duty a high privilege. *He wakeneth morning by morning*, &c. This expreſſion ſeems to allude to the practice of eminent aſſiduous teachers, who early in the morning awake their ſcholars, that they may diligently apply their minds to ſtudy; and who frequently excite them to cloſe attention to their inſtructions, as the beſt way to the attainment of knowledge. The words may import, that the Meſſiah from his infancy was conſtantly inſtructed by the Lord God and his Spirit; that every day from morning until evening he was ever preſent with him, illuminating his mind, and acquainting him with thoſe things which he was to communicate to his church. Such was his aſtoniſhing progreſs in learning, that at twelve years of age, he was employed about his heavenly Father's buſineſs; ſitting in the midſt of the doctors, hearing them, and aſking them queſtions. And all that heard him were amazed at his underſtanding and anſwers. After this illuſtrious teacher entered on his public miniſtrations, thoſe who attended to his incomparable diſcourſes bare him witneſs, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. His intimate acquaintance with the moſt ſublime ſubjects; he does not ſeem like other prophets to have acquired by means of dreams and viſions, but to have been led to the knowledge of divine truths, by the extraordinary illumination of the Holy Spirit inceſſantly afforded him from day to day.

He wakeneth mine ear, &c. Men of great capacity and extenſive erudition, receive the information communicated to them with cloſe attention, with clear perception, often revolving in their minds what they have heard, that they may improve it to their own advantage, and be the more capable of imparting knowledge to the illiterate. To ſuch diligent and careful attention was the ear of Meſſiah wakened, that he might be perfectly qualified

for

for being the inſtructor of his diſciples. He aſſiduouſly liſtened to all the diſcoveries of the divine will that were given to him, he fully underſtood them, he often meditated upon them, and with admirable prudence communicated them to thoſe who attended him. This important benefit poſſeſſed by our great Mediator, we ought to be ſolicitous in ſome good meaſure to enjoy, that we may profit by the inſtructions which in various ways we receive from the Moſt High.

5 The LORD God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

The readineſs and alacrity with which the great Redeemer of mankind executed the important work to which he was deſtined by Jehovah, is in this verſe ſtrongly expreſſed.—*The Lord God hath opened mine ear*, &c. to hearken to the command he hath given me, to which I am prepared to yield a prompt and chearful obedience, notwithſtanding the immenſe difficulties that muſt be ſurmounted in order to fulfil his commiſſion. This act of Jehovah toward the Meſſiah, is deſcribed in ſimilar terms by the prophet David in his fortieth Ode, at ver. 6. 'Mine 'ears haſt thou opened.' The words are thus explained by the writer of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, chap. x. 5. where ſpeaking of the Son of God coming into this world, he ſaith, 'A body haſt 'thou prepared me.' Theſe ſeveral expreſſions perfectly harmonize, and denote the preparation requiſite, that the Lord of glory might yield obedience to the Sovereign will of the Father who ſent him. For this purpoſe, the Lord God formed for him a human body, one principal organ of which is mentioned by our prophet in place of the whole corporeal ſyſtem. The phraſe here uſed is ſignificant and proper, becauſe it is impoſſible that he could have done the will of God had not a body been

been prepared for him, and had not his ears been open to receive inſtruction. The words plainly intimate, that all neceſſary proviſion was made that he might be capable of fulfilling the will of God, and of accompliſhing the arduous work which was given him to do. The joyful conſequences therefore are ſet forth both by prophet and apoſtle in theſe words, 'Then ſaid I, Lo, I come to do thy 'will, O God.'—The whole aſtoniſhing plan of ſalvation with the qualifications poſſeſſed by the Saviour for its complete execution, originate in the Lord God, who prepared for his own Son a human body, by means of which it was accompliſhed in the fulneſs of time.

And I was not rebellious, &c. Much more is intended than expreſſed. The Meſſiah far from oppoſing the will of Jehovah, or turning back from the work aſſigned him, yielded perfect obedience to the commands he received of the Father. The firſt words that he uttered, recorded in the goſpel are truly memorable. Though they were lately quoted, I will repeat them. They were addreſſed to his mother, to whom he ſaid 'Wiſt you not that I muſt 'be about my Father's buſineſs?' Though he had been ſubject to his parents, he gave her to know that he had a Father infinitely higher than her, who had intruſted him with the execution of a work of which ſhe did not ſeem to be aware, to which every other matter was to be kept in ſubſerviency. In the progreſs of his miniſtry he declared, 'My 'meat is to do the will of him that ſent me, and to 'finiſh his work *.' Jeſus Chriſt was hungry, and had ſent to market for proviſion, in the meantime the moſt delicious meat was given him, for which he had the higheſt reliſh; namely, the ſaving of a ſoul from death, and covering a multitude of ſins. This he ſaid was his meat, the food that he moſt deſired, and which was perfectly ſuited to his taſte. Toward the concluſion of life, in the proſpect of encountering

* John iv. 34.

countering the greateſt difficulties, ſuch was his ſubmiſſive language, 'As the Father hath commanded 'me, even ſo I do*.' Nor did the near view of the moſt excruciating ſufferings, make him ſhrink back from finiſhing the arduous enterpriſe in which he was engaged. Such were his invincible fortitude and magnanimity, ſuch were his intenſe deſires for the completion of his glorious deſign of ſaving them that were loſt; that he informed his diſciples he muſt go to Jeruſalem, the place where he was to ſuſtain the moſt dreadful ſufferings, and to ſubmit to the moſt agonizing death. Though with infinite eaſe he could have ſhook the pillars of heaven, and buried his enemies in the wreck of the world, whilſt he himſelf ſtood ſafe amid the ruins, he generouſly forgave them, and bleſſed his Father for giving him counſel to perſiſt in the reſolution of laying down his life for them. Aſtoniſhing grace! Incomparable ſubmiſſion! Who does not admire ſuch determined firmneſs? Who will turn his back upon ſuch a Saviour? Who would on any account relinquiſh his labour of love?

6 I gave my back to the ſmiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from ſhame and ſpitting.

Some of the great indignities and injuries which the Meſſiah was patiently to endure in his humbled ſtate are here ſpecified; ſome of the circumſtances of ignominy and pain to which he was patiently to ſubmit are exactly delineated.—*I gave my back to the ſmiters.* 'The plowers plowed upon my back, 'they made long their furrows, may Iſrael now ſay!' Such is the intimate union ſubſiſting between Jeſus Chriſt and his church, that what is ſaid concerning the one frequently admits of an application to the other. A remarkable inſtance of the truth of this remark occurs in the paſſage I now quoted from the

* John xiv. 31.

the hundred and twenty-ninth pſalm. What the royal poet ſaid of Iſrael was verified in the Saviour of Iſrael, when Pilate the Roman governor took him and ſcourged him, as it is written John xix. 1. —*And my cheeks*, &c. Though this particular inſtance of contempt is not explicitly mentioned in the hiſtory of our Lord's ſufferings, yet there is no reaſon to doubt of its having been literally fulfilled, when the chief prieſts and elders delivered him to the Gentiles to mock, and to ſcourge, and to crucify, when all things written in the prophets concerning the Son of man were accompliſhed.—*I hid not my face from ſhame*, &c. How manifold were the inſtances of ſcorn and derriſion offered to the Meſſiah, to which he ſubmitted with invincible meekneſs, patience, and conſtancy! He bare reproach, and ſhame covered his face; he was the ſong of the drunkard; he became a ſtranger and a proverb to his brethren. How diſtreſſing beyond meaſure to a great mind are the vile indignities mentioned by our Prophet! No wonder that he ſaid who ſuſtained them, 'Reproach hath broken 'my heart, and I am full of heavineſs.' From theſe diſgraceful inſults, however, he did not hide or turn away his face, but on the contrary ſuſtained them with fortitude and magnanimity.—Relying on the merits of his obedience and death, let us go forth after him, bearing his reproach; tenderly ſympathiſing with him under the painful ignominy to which he ſubmitted for our ſakes, and ſuſtaining with determined firmneſs all the reproaches, to which we are expoſed on account of our connection with him.

7 For the LORD God will help me; therefore ſhall I not be confounded; therefore have I ſet my face like a flint, and I know that I ſhall not be aſhamed.

The Meſſiah expreſſes in this verſe his firm dependence

pendence on Jehovah for aſſiſtance, and his aſſured confidence of the glorious ſucceſs with which the arduous work ſhould be attended that he was engaged to execute. Firmly relying on the Lord God who had given him the tongue of the learned, who had opened his ear, and prepared for him a body, that he would grant him all neceſſary aid, he triumphs in the proſpect of enjoying his help and ſupport. The inſpired writer of the twenty-ſecond pſalm, after having related the circumſtances of his paſſion, introduces him with this requeſt, 'Be not 'thou far from me, O Lord; O my ſtrength, haſte 'thee to help me.' Nor did he aſk in vain; for the Lord God aſſiſted him, and carried him honourably through all his trials and ſufferings.—*Therefore ſhall I not be confounded.* The united powers of earth and hell ſhall not be able to diſconcert the meaſures that I adopt, nor to fruſtrate the deſign I have formed; no circumſtances ſhall give riſe to ſhame and confuſion of face. With this pleaſing aſſurance the event exactly correſponded; for no oppoſition could defeat his intention; he finiſhed tranſgreſſion, he vanquiſhed his enemies, he loſt none of thoſe given him to redeem, and acquired to himſelf immortal glory and honour.

Therefore have I ſet my face like a flint. Theſe words forcibly expreſs the unſhaken firmneſs and conſtancy of the great Redeemer in reſiſting the virulent oppoſition with which he had to contend. Such was his undaunted reſolution, ſuch his unconquerable intrepidity, that the inveterate malice and combined power of his adverſaries could not make the ſmalleſt impreſſion on his mind, or prevent him from proſecuting the benevolent purpoſe he had formed. Neither fear nor force could in the leaſt retard his exertions. Some great men have diſcovered amazing firmneſs and courage in encountering dangers. Leonidas being told that the Perſian archers with whom he had to fight were ſo numerous that their arrows would darken the ſun,—

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So much the better, ſaid he; we ſhall then fight in the ſhade. The heroic bravery of this celebrated warrior, all circumſtances conſidered, is not worthy to be compared to the calm inſuperable magnanimity and intrepidity diſplayed by the Meſſiah on many memorable occaſions. Recollect the meſſage he ſent to Herod the king; his aſcent to Jeruſalem, where he knew he was to endure the moſt excruciating ſufferings; and the greatneſs of mind he diſplayed when he met thoſe who were ſent to apprehend him, and you may ſee this ſcripture remarkably verified. The greater the ſtruggle, the ſtronger and the longer the conteſt, the more illuſtriouſly diſplayed are the virtues of the conqueror, and the more glorious the victory.

And I know that I ſhall not be aſhamed. 'Shame (ſaith the proverb) is the promotion of fools;' this is all the preferment to which they may expect to be advanced. It is added as a contraſt to this maxim, 'But the wiſe ſhall inherit glory.' This remark was eminently verified in Jeſus Chriſt, who, notwithſtanding the utmoſt efforts of his inveterate enemies to render him odious and contemptible, yet by all their malevolent exertions could never ſhew cauſe why he ſhould have been aſhamed. He perfectly knew that his glorious goſpel was to triumph over error, and to be publiſhed to all nations for the obedience of faith—that his predictions, promiſes, and threatenings were to be punctually fulfilled;—and though according to the will of God he was to die by the hands of men, he was thereby to aboliſh ſin and death, to riſe triumphant from the dead, and to reign in eternal glory. Juſtly, therefore, might he ſay, I know that I ſhall not be aſhamed.—Nor ſhall they be confounded, who, having obtained help from God, ſurmount with determined reſolution the difficulties that they meet with in the path of duty. Such may boldly ſay with God's ſervant David, 'Then ſhall I not be aſha-

'med when I have reſpect to all thy command-
ments *.'

8 *He is* near that juſtifieth me; who will contend with me? let us ſtand together; who *is* mine adverſary? let him come near to me.

The Meſſiah expreſſes his firm confidence that he ſhould be honourably acquitted from all the calumnies and injuries with which he was moſt undeſervedly loaded, and boldly defies his adverſaries to bring forward any juſt ground of accuſation againſt him.—*He is near that juſtifieth me*, who will not only judge all men by the law written in their hearts, the Jews by the law of Moſes, and his elect according to the law of grace; but who will judge me according to the law given me as Mediator, and vindicate his righteous ſervant from the foul aſperſions thrown out againſt him. He will openly acknowledge that I never ſaid or did any thing that was not perfectly agreeable to the commandment I received from him; he will bring forth my righteouſneſs as the light, and my judgment as the noon day. This ſentiment is explicitly aſſerted by our Saviour, in the twelfth chapter of the goſpel by John, 49th and 50th verſes; 'For I have not ſpo-
'ken of myſelf: but the Father which ſent me, he
'gave me a commandment, what I ſhould ſay,
'and what I ſhould ſpeak. And I know that his
'commandment is life everlaſting; whatſoever I
'ſpeak, therefore, even as the Father ſaid unto me,
'ſo I ſpeak.' Many heinous crimes were charged againſt him by his malicious perſecutors; many evil ſurmiſes were ſpread abroad concerning him. He was ſaid to be a glutton, a wine biber, a friend of publicans and ſinners, a ſeducer of the people, and poſſeſſed with a devil. Theſe and other heavy charges the Phariſees and thoſe who joined them brought againſt him, and at laſt they had him publicly condemned

* Pſal. cxix. 6.

demned by their counſel. From theſe falſe accuſations laid againſt him, he was confident that the righteous judge of all the earth would abſolve him. Accordingly he was fully acquitted by the ſupreme Judge of the world, who was always near to protect him by his providence from the hoſtile deſigns of his enemies, and to impart to him conſummate wiſdom, amiable goodneſs, uncontrollable power, and divine eloquence, by the abundant communications of his Spirit. Theſe tranſcendent excellencies were manifeſt at all times in his conduct, in his diſcourſes, and miracles. In his ſufferings and death the moſt illuſtrious proofs were exhibited of the divine preſence that ever attended him, which atteſted his majeſty and innocence, and demonſtrated that he was indeed the Son of God. Beſides, by his reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion to the right hand of God, with their joyful conſequences, he was declared to be the true Meſſiah, and the Son of God with power. 'Therefore the whole houſe 'of Iſrael ought to know aſſuredly, that God hath 'made that ſame Jeſus who was crucified, both Lord 'and Chriſt *.' In this manner did God the Father bear witneſs to him, and juſtify him openly before the people.—Theſe words of Jeſus Chriſt which I have now illuſtrated may be adopted with joy and triumph by every true Chriſtian. God who juſtifies me, (may he ſay) who delivers from condemnation and wrath, and graciouſly accepts of me thro' his beloved Son, is always near to grant what I call upon him for; to preſerve and aſſiſt, to eſtabliſh and enrich, to comfort and felicitate. Having the Lord on my ſide, I will not fear nor be diſmayed.

Who will contend with me? Having expreſſed his firm confidence in the ſuccour and protection of Jehovah, the Meſſiah proceeds to challenge his enemies to combat with him. Who will preſume to ſtrive with me, to call in queſtion either my right or my ability to perform the work I am engaged to execute?

* Acts ii. 36.

execute? If any are diſpoſed to enquire into the juſtice of my claim, the truth that I affirm, or the authority by which I act—*Let us ſtand together*, that the matter in diſpute may be fully repreſented, and fairly decided.—*Who is mine adverſary*, that will be ſo audacious as bring any charge againſt me that he can ſubſtantiate; relative to my character, or the important enterpriſe in which I am embarked, and which I am obliged to execute—*Let him come near to me*, that I may know with whom I have to do, and that the controverſy may be juſtly determined, and he ſhall certainly be convinced of the folly and vanity of every hoſtile attempt that can be made againſt me. Such was the heroic courage of Jeſus Chriſt, that he was not intimidated by his enemies; he boldly ſet them at defiance, and, when he judged proper, replied with firmneſs and fortitude to all the accuſations they brought againſt him. Nay, ſuch is the happy influence of his invincible magnanimity, that a portion of the noble ſpirit whereby he was animated hath deſcended upon his followers, who in language ſimilar to his have gloried in their ſuperiority to every adverſe power. Hear the triumphant exclamation of the apoſtle of the Gentiles, who himſelf had been accuſed of being a peſtilent fellow, and a mover of ſedition, 'Who 'ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? 'It is God that juſtifieth; who is he that condem-'neth *?' He challenges all the creatures in the univerſe to lay any thing to his charge that could deprive him of confidence in God, and an intereſt in his favour. By this eminent ſervant of God, who had imbibed the Spirit of his divine maſter, Chriſtians are taught to repel the unjuſt accuſations of their adverſaries, in humble reliance on God their Saviour. If the ſupreme Legiſlator and Judge acquit from condemnation, if he graciouſly pardon and accept, who and where is he that may preſume to counteract the ſentence of the Almighty?

9 Behold

* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

9 Behold, the LORD God will help me; who *is* he *that* ſhall condemn me? lo, they all ſhall wax old as a garment; the moth ſhall eat them up.

The challenge he had given to his adverſaries in the preceding verſe, is here renewed by the Meſſiah, who points out the grounds of his unſhaken confidence. The Lord God omnipotent, hath repeatedly given me the moſt explicit aſſurances of his continual aid and ſupport, and therefore I cannot fail to obtain ſucceſs and victory. In firm dependence on his promiſed all-ſufficient help, I again aſk,—*Who is he that ſhall condemn me*, and bring againſt me a charge of any crime that he can verify, and pronounce upon me a righteous ſentence of condemnation.—*They all ſhall wax old*, &c. The royal Pſalmiſt, when celebrating the praiſes of Jehovah, on account of his immutability and eternity, and expreſſing his truſt in the divine power and faithfulneſs, employs the ſame compariſon that is here uſed, Pſalm cii. 26. 'They ſhall periſh, but thou 'ſhalt endure; yea, all of them ſhall wax old like a 'garment, as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, 'and they ſhall be changed.' At the time appointed by infinite wiſdom, after the heavens and the earth have ſerved the purpoſes for which they were created, they ſhall be laid aſide as an old worn out garment, which hath loſt its beauty, firmneſs, and utility. By the ſame alluſion, the Meſſiah repreſents the feeble decayed ſtate to which his enemies who contended with him ſhall be reduced.—*The moth ſhall eat them up*. Though a very feeble inſect almoſt deſtitute of ſubſtance; yet it quickly conſumes the ſtrongeſt garments. In like manner the adverſaries of Jeſus Chriſt ſhall be ſpeedily conſumed by the weakeſt inſtruments. They may fooliſhly imagine that they are able to contend with him, whereas the meaneſt creature that he employs to execute his righteous vengeance, ſhall certainly

certainly deſtroy them. Divine judgments ſhall ſecretly eat out their ſtrength, waſte their beauty, and render them uncapable of effecting any valuable purpoſe. And as the garment breeds the moth, which effectually deſtroys it; ſo thoſe who oppoſe the glorious Redeemer, foſter in their own boſoms the ſeeds of thoſe corrupt paſſions, which bring upon them conſuming calamities.—By this paſſage of ſcripture, we are inſtructed from what ſources we ought to derive encouragement, when we engage in any arduous ſervice, we ought to look to God to furniſh us for the work he aſſigns, to ſtrengthen us for the performance of it, and to endow us with courage to execute it with firmneſs and conſtancy, amidſt the cenſures and oppoſition that we may meet with. Let us at all times ſtudy to obtain his approbation, with whom none can ſucceſsfully contend; let us gratefully accept the bleſſings of his redemption, depend on his mediation, ſubmit to his authority, and rejoice in his adminiſtration. Then may we hope that when all earthly glory ſhall fade away as a flower, he will admit us into his kingdom and preſence, where is fulneſs of joys for evermore.

10 ¶ Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walketh *in* darkneſs, and hath no light? let him truſt in the name of the LORD, and ſtay upon his God.

Iſaiah having prophetically repreſented the treatment which the Meſſiah was to receive from the Jews; he directs his diſcourſe to both the claſſes of which that people were compoſed; namely, the righteous and the wicked. He begins with addreſſing good and comfortable words to the upright among them, in order to ſolace their anxious dejected minds.—*Who is among you that feareth the Lord?* The fear of the Lord which is here intended, conſiſts

fists in sacred reverence of his glorious Majesty, in humble veneration of his divine excellencies, accompanied with profound submission to his supreme authority. It is implanted in the human heart by the blessed God himself; it is the beginning of wisdom, it disposes to depart from evil, and produces the most important effects both on the temper and conduct. It blends its operations with the exercise of every other grace. It intermixes with faith, and renders it fruitful; it co-operates with love, and prevents it from becoming secure; it unites with hope, and keeps it from swelling into presumption; it mingles with joy, and so moderates it that we rejoice with trembling. It extends its benign influence through every department of divine worship, and so occupies the mind with awful respect for God, as excites to caution and circumspection in every situation and service; whilst it cherishes amiable humility in the divine presence. It is increased and established by frequently contrasting our impurity with the perfect holiness of Jehovah; our meanness with his infinite grandeur, our weakness with his omnipotence, our folly with his consummate wisdom, our emptiness with his inexhaustible fulness. From all which it is evident, that the fear of the Lord peculiar to his servants, is very different from that servile dread of God as an offended sovereign and judge, whereby the security of transgressors is disturbed, and a loud alarm of danger reaches their consciences. It is also essentially distinguished from that perplexing timidity which is sometimes felt by the workers of iniquity, who are in great fear because God is in the generation of the righteous; and who are terrified at the thoughts of God whom they have contemned. From this powerful principle, the faithful servants of God are often denominated in scripture. As men frequently bear the name of the particular business wherein they are chiefly employed; so those who live and act under the governing influence of reverence for God, are with great propriety characterised

racteriſed by this gracious diſpoſition.—We beſeech thee, O Lord God, that according to thy word thou wilt put thy fear into our hearts, that we ſhall not depart from thee.

That obeyeth the voice of his ſervant. The Meſſiah frequently mentioned in theſe prophecies as the ſervant of Jehovah, is I ſuppoſe the perſon who is here chiefly intended. Though conſidered as Mediator and Redeemer, he ſuſtains this character, yet he poſſeſſes abſolute right to command, and his peculiar people are bound by the ſtrongeſt ties to obey his voice. God hath ſet him King over his holy hill of Zion. He is the great Prophet that God hath raiſed up, who hath ſpoken to us all that he commanded him: He is his beloved Son, to whom Jehovah hath required us to hearken diligently, and to yield obedience. To obey his voice is to liſten attentively to his inſtructions, and ſo to underſtand them as to become wiſe unto ſalvation. It is to receive the law from his mouth, and to lay up his word in our hearts, that we ſin not againſt him. It is to yield chearful unlimited ſubjection to whatſoever he hath commanded; convinced that it is our duty, honour, and intereſt to do his will. Senſible that all his precepts which relate either to the exerciſe of the heart, or the fruits of holineſs and righteouſneſs in the life, are proofs of his gracious regard for our happineſs; we ought in all things to approve ourſelves to our great Lord and Maſter in heaven. Such is the habitual delightful employment of thoſe who obey the voice of God's ſervant, who hath explicitly declared, that the obſervance of his laws is the beſt evidence of that ſupreme affection which he juſtly demands. 'He 'that hath my commandments (ſaith he) and keep-'eth them, he it is that loveth me; and again, 'if ye 'love me, keep my commandments.' Gratitude to him for his benefits, and a ſenſe of his authority, diſpoſes thoſe who are his diſciples indeed to keep his word, and to delight in his law after the inward man;

man.—Perſons of this deſcription may occaſionally fall into the ſtate mentioned in the following words.

That walketh in darkneſs, &c. Every intelligent reader of the Bible muſt have obſerved, that darkneſs and light are often ſpoken of in ſcripture in a figurative ſenſe, that the former denotes trouble and perplexity, and that the latter ſignifies the oppoſite ſtate of ſerenity, happineſs, and joy. This ſeems plainly to be the meaning of theſe terms in the expreſſions before us. Thoſe who fear the Lord and obey his voice, are ſometimes involved in diſtreſs, deſtitute of tranquillity and conſolation. Afflicted in their perſons or families, in their friends or poſſeſſions, haraſſed by manifold temptations and corrupt paſſions, oppreſſed with a ſenſe of guilt, afraid of the awful threatenings denounced in the word of God, and diſquieted by the accuſations of their conſciences; they cannot perceive their intereſt in the divine favour and love, nor ſee by what way they may emerge from their troubles, and obtain deliverance. In this forlorn ſituation, though they indulge not in ſullen ſadneſs, nor repine at divine diſpenſations, their ſatisfaction and joy are impaired by ſolitude and anxiety, their hope is enfeebled by diſappointment, and their confidence weakened by the difficulties with which they are embarraſſed. Though the divine procedure in this inſtance may be the ſubject of mournful complaint, when the important purpoſes are rightly conſidered, that may thereby be promoted by infinite wiſdom and love, the affliction will be greatly alleviated, and light will ſpring up out of obſcurity. Unto the upright who walk on in their integrity; light ariſeth in darkneſs, 'For the Lord will 'not caſt off for ever. But though he cauſe grief, yet 'will he have compaſſion according to the multi-'tude of his mercies *.' By allowing his people to fall into ſuch diſtreſſing circumſtances, the bleſſed God diſplays his glorious ſovereignty; he ſubdues

* Lam. iii. 31, 32.

their corrupt paſſions; he exerciſes and improves their graces; and teaches them highly to prize his mercies, and the light of his countenance.—In this ſtate they greatly need ſupport and relief, for obtaining which to each of them, it is ſaid,

Let him truſt in the Lord, &c. Theſe two expreſſions which point out the duty of thoſe who walk in darkneſs are of ſimilar import, the latter ſerving to explain and inforce the former. To truſt in the Lord, and to ſtay upon God, is not raſhly to preſume on the divine goodneſs, or to entertain deluſive hopes of the favour and protection of Jehovah, whilſt we provoke his diſpleaſure, by adopting meaſures to obtain deliverance, that he hath prohibited. It is not like the chief men in Jeruſalem, to judge for reward, to teach for hire, and to divine for money, and yet to lean upon the Lord and ſay, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us *. It is not to bleſs ourſelves in our hearts and to ſay, We ſhall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our evil hearts †. This is not to truſt upon God, but upon lying vanities. To truſt in Jehovah, is in the diligent performance of duty, and the faithful improvement of appointed means, with firm perſuaſion of the divine goodneſs and power, to place entire dependance on the Almighty, to prevent the evils we fear, to remove thoſe which we feel, and to beſtow every good thing neceſſary to deliverance and happineſs. It is in the exerciſe of humble believing expectation, to repoſe unſuſpecting confidence in the attributes, providence and promiſes, of Jehovah, which frees from perplexing doubts, deſponding fears, and diſquieting diſcouragements. It is to look to our Maker, and to have reſpect to the Holy One of Iſrael; it is to caſt our burden upon the Lord, and to rely on him for the ſeaſonable communication of every promiſed bleſſing ſuited to our circumſtances.—This truſt ought to be fixed,

In

* Micah iii. 11. † Deut. xxix. 19.

In the name of the Lord, i. e. in Jehovah himſelf, who manifeſts his glorious perfections in delivering thoſe who put their truſt in him. This is the meaning of the expreſſion in the directory for prayer given by Jeſus Chriſt, where he teaches to ſay, 'Hallowed be thy name.' Let the God of heaven and earth with his infinite excellencies, be ſuitably acknowledged, ſanctified and honoured, throughout the whole world. As men are diſtinguiſhed one from another by their names, ſo the Moſt High God is known by the revelations he hath vouchſafed to give of himſelf, which afford ſatisfying proofs of his infinite majeſty and glory, and exhibit him as the proper object of truſt and dependance. —In his omnipotence we may ſafely confide. All other ſupports may fail, but he is the rock of ages, and they who rely on him, ſhall never be moved. If we ſpeak of ſtrength, lo, he is ſtrong. By the word of his power he made the worlds, and upholds them in exiſtence. Many aſtoniſhing deliverances hath he wrought for his church. In the perſon, the life, the death, and reſurrection of Immanuel; in the converſion, ſanctification, and preſervation of his people, to his everlaſting kingdom, his glorious power is nobly diſplayed. When therefore you that fear God are in perplexity and trouble, truſt in the Lord; commit yourſelves to him who is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you can aſk or think.—In his goodneſs, we may place unſuſpecting confidence. He is incomparably good, good unto all, eſpecially unto them that hope in his mercy, in whatever condition they are placed. When walking in darkneſs, he can eaſily diſpel the gloom, and cauſe the day ſpring from on high to viſit them. When in trouble, he can revive and ſend relief; in temptation he can ſuccour and deliver. When oppreſſed by a ſenſe of guilt and depravity, he is ready to forgive and to heal every ſpiritual diſtemper. When diſtreſſed with fears of death, he will be with you, and make

his

his rod and ſtaff to comfort you. No want ſo great that he cannot ſupply, no difficulty ſo urgent from which he cannot extricate, no deſire ſo large that he cannot gratify, no bleſſing ſo precious that he will refuſe to grant. Truſt then in the Lord, that he will beſtow all that you are diſpoſed aright to receive, and your expectations ſhall not be diſappointed.—On his faithfulneſs we ought firmly to rely. He is the God of truth, for whom it is impoſſible to lie; one title of his word ſhall not fail of receiving its full accompliſhment. He is faithful who hath promiſed, who alſo will perform. He who poſſeſſes Almighty power and conſummate goodneſs, can never be deſtitute of ability and inclination to fulfil the promiſes he hath made to advance the intereſts of his people. In all ages and in every condition, they have experienced his conſtancy and fidelity, inſomuch that no one inſtance can be ſpecified wherein the Lord hath failed to confer the good things he hath promiſed. Truſt in Jehovah at all times, ye people pour out your heart before him, God is a refuge for us.

And ſtay upon his God, with whom he that feareth the Lord ſtands intimately connected in the moſt endearing relations. He is thy gracious Father, who gave thee being, breath, and all things; who regenerated thee by his Spirit, and admitted thee into his divine family. He is thy faithful friend, who by all the diſpenſations of his providence and grace will certainly advance thy happineſs and ſalvation. He is thy God, whoſe perfections and providence ſhall be employed to promote thy beſt intereſts, who himſelf will be thy exceeding great reward, and for ever enrich thee with ſubſtantial proofs of his favour, that is better than life. 'Truſt, then, in the Lord, and wait patiently 'for him; fret not thyſelf becauſe of him that 'proſpereth in his way. Delight thyſelf, alſo, in 'the Lord, and he ſhall give thee, the deſires of 'thine heart; commit thy way unto the Lord, truſt

'alſo

'alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs *.' Stay and reſt upon him, and he will diſpel your perplexing fears and ſorrows; hope in him, and you ſhall yet praiſe him who is the health of your countenance and your God.

11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compaſs *yourſelves* about with ſparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the ſparks *that* ye have kindled. This ſhall ye have of mine hand; ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow.

Our Prophet concludes this portion of his excellent diſcourſe by ſolemnly declaring that the adverſaries of the kingdom of God, who walk in the evil ways of their own hearts, ſhall certainly periſh. To this momentous intereſting ſubject, which ought to be conſidered with the utmoſt provident ſolicitude, he demands ſerious attention. The perſons who are eſpecially addreſſed are thus figuratively deſcribed—*All ye that kindle a fire*, &c. Theſe words, which ought not to be literally underſtood, are uſed ſymbolically, to repreſent the artful devices formed by wicked people, whereby they aim to comfort themſelves under awful denunciations of terrible judgments which ſhall be inflicted upon them, if divine mercy and true repentance do not intervene. —*That compaſs yourſelves about with ſparks*, or, according to the tranſlation of the late biſhop of London, 'who heap the fuel round about.' In either ſenſe the words ſtrongly intimate the perſevering aſſiduity with which perſons of this deſcription endeavour by improper means to ſolace themſelves, and to harden their minds againſt the complicated miſeries which they refuſe to adopt proper meaſures to eſcape. They likewiſe point out the inefficacy of all the vain expedients and ill-judged attempts of obſtinate tranſgreſſors to attain the ends they have

* Pſal. xxxvii. 3, 4, 5.

have in view, and to acquire ſubſtantial comfort.—To people of this deſcription God ſaith by his ſervant,

Walk in the light of the fire, &c. This direction is plainly ironical, and imports the reverſe of what it ſeems to recommend. Expreſſions of this ſort we ſometimes meet with in ſcripture, of which a remarkable inſtance occurs in the Prophecies of Ezekiel, chap. xx. 39. 'As for you, O houſe of Iſ-'rael, thus ſaith the Lord God, Go ye, ſerve every 'one his idols,' &c. God had explicitly required them to refrain from the ſervice of idols; but after they had obſtinately perſiſted in this prohibited practice, the more effectually to convince them of their wickedneſs, he ſarcaſtically tells them every one to go ſerve his idols. In the ſame ſenſe the words before us are to be explained, of which this ſeems to be the import. Proceed to take every advantage you can derive from the fooliſh devices you have framed, whereby you flatter yourſelves, of obtaining the gratification of thoſe deluſive expectations, that you cheriſh of enjoying ſafety and tranquillity. Go on in the ruinous courſe that you have choſen, act under the influence of the bad principles you have adopted, and try to acquire all the benefits you can reap from your vain imaginations. Remember, however, that all your deluſory ſchemes ſhall be fruſtrated, and ultimately terminate in the confuſion and deſtruction of their authors and abettors.

This ſhall ye have of mine hand, &c. The Lord God peremptorily aſſures thoſe who endeavour to fortify themſelves by vain confidences againſt his threatened judgments, that he will ſeverely puniſh them for their arrogance and wickedneſs. His right hand ſhall find out all his enemies; he ſhall bring them forth into the light, and execute upon them a ſentence of righteous condemnation. He ſhall make them as a fiery oven in the time of his anger, when an evil conſcience within, and dreadful calamities

mities without, ſhall torment them, as a prelude to thoſe future puniſhments which the wrath of Jehovah will inflict upon the impenitent and incorrigible, according to the enormity of their transgreſſions.—*Ye ſhall lie down in ſorrow.* Their ſtrength being exhauſted, their ſpirits ſhall faint, their hands ſhall become feeble, ſo that, unable to reſiſt or eſcape impending miſeries, they ſhall be overwhelmed by diſtreſs and anguiſh. Oppreſſed with trouble and grief, and ſeeing no ground of hope and conſolation, they ſhall experience the truth of the awful prediction delivered by the prophet Zephaniah, chap. i. 14. 'The great day of the Lord is near; it 'haſteth greatly; even the voice of the day of the 'Lord: the mighty man ſhall cry there bitterly.' The ſignificant words of our prophet alludes to the diſtreſſed ſtate of one who is laid on a ſick-bed, grievouſly afflicted with agony of mind and pains of body, who is obliged to endure the moſt complicated miſery, deprived of all hope of recovery. Such a deplorable condition affords a moving repreſentation of the torment and anguiſh to which the implacable enemies of the kingdom of God our Saviour ſhall be conſigned, 'in outer darkneſs, where 'ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth *,' 'where 'the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched †.' —This prediction, which hath been verified in the deſtruction of many, who through envy and hatred have oppoſed and perſecuted the Lord Jeſus and his diſciples, ſhall receive a more full accompliſhment when he ſhall appoint his ſervants to bring forth and ſlay before him thoſe his enemies, who would not that he ſhould reign over them ‡. Would you, then, happily eſcape the dreadful doom here threatened? Faithfully improve the ſolemn warning you have now received. Alarmed by a ſenſe of danger, have immediate recourſe to the infinite mercy of God, through the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſaves from the wrath to come, that he may forgive your

* Mat. viii. 12. † Mark ix. 48. ‡ Luke xix. 27.

your ſins, and deliver you from deſerved puniſhment. And earneſtly implore his ſovereign grace to turn you from your evil ways, and to conduct you in the path of life, that henceforth you may live to him that died for you, and roſe again.

Thus far, through the help of God, to the praiſe of his grace, we have advanced in the expoſition of the beautiful and ſublime portion of ſcripture which bears the name of the PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH. To the Lord God, merciful and gracious, I offer devout thankſgiving, for the kind aſſiſtance and countenance he hath been pleaſed to afford. To you, my hearers, I preſent my grateful acknowledgments for your candid attention, and the favourable reception you have hitherto given to theſe Lectures. From God I requeſt his Spirit and benediction to accompany my feeble attempts to promote his honour and the intereſts of his kingdom. From you, my brethren, I intreat the continuance of your affectionate regard, a ſhare in your fervent prayers, and your cordial acceptance of my ſervices in the goſpel of Chriſt. The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all. Amen.

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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